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ITES
– Jay Nordlinger

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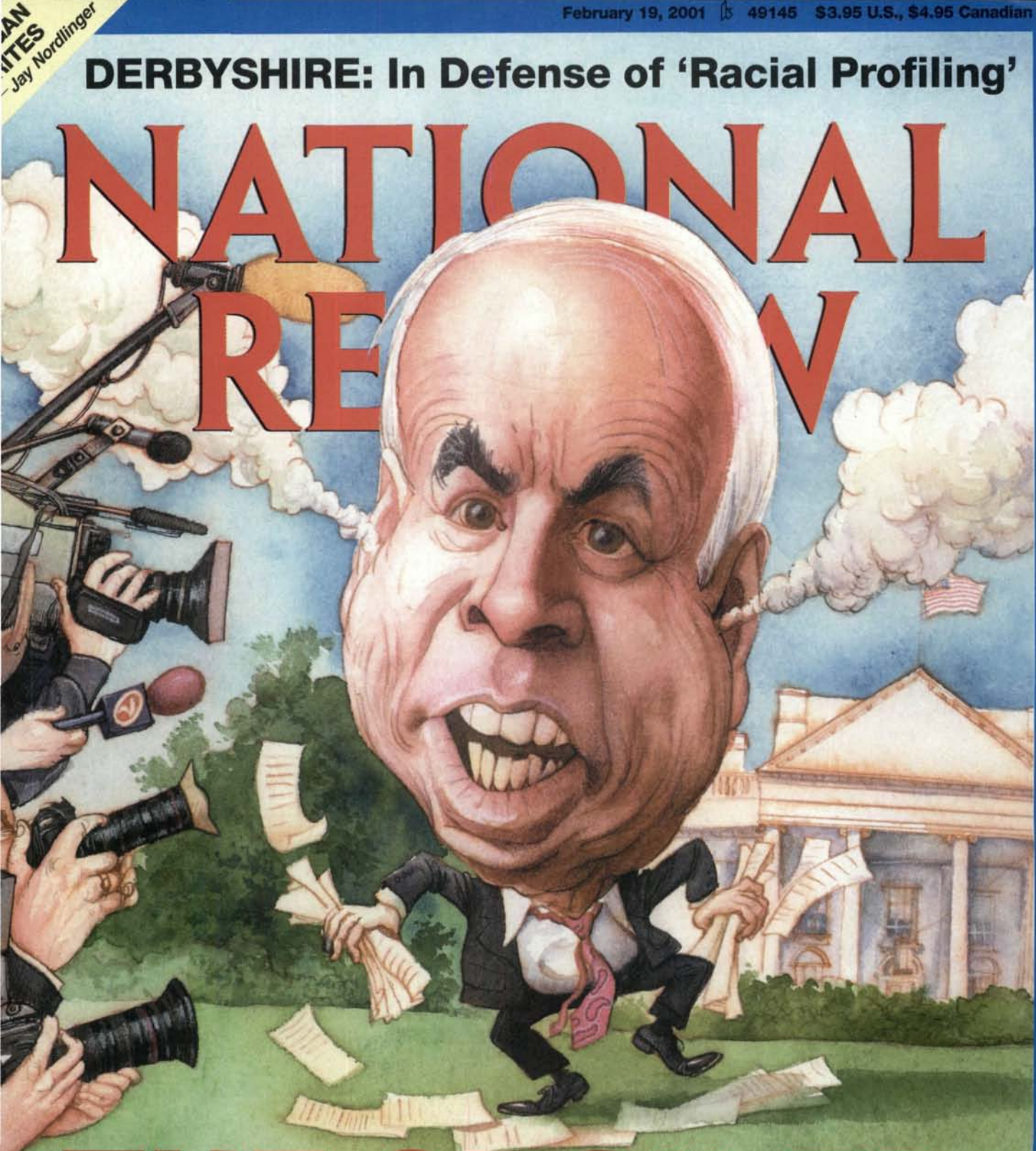

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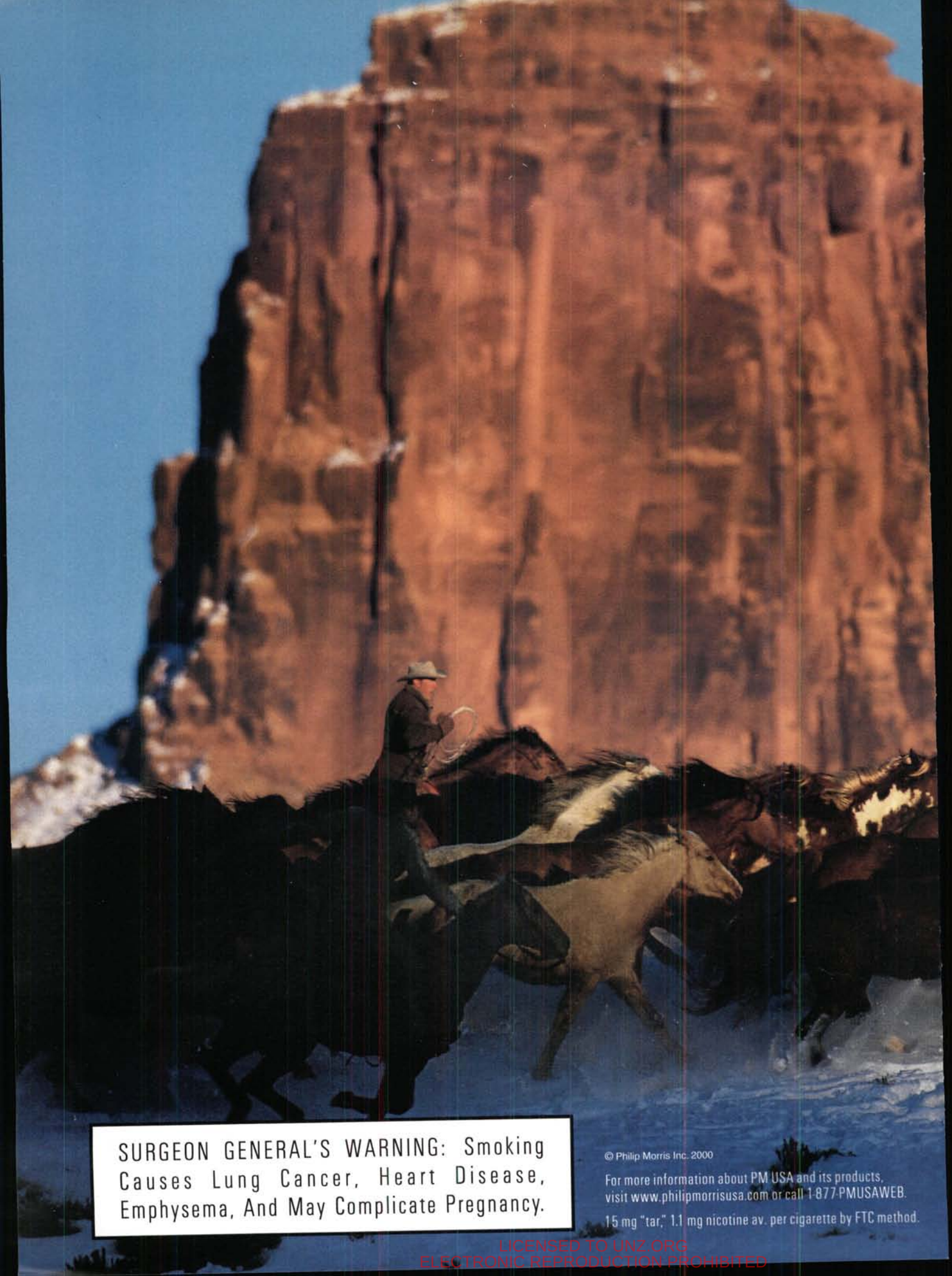

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■ LETTERS ■

THE GREATEST

An item in your Jan. 22 issue states, "There is lot to admire about the America of 1930—it had just produced the Greatest Generation" ("The Week"). The Greatest Generation? The greatest of all the generations of Americans? This designation has become commonplace for the World War II generation, thanks to Tom Brokaw.

But the only generation that deserves it is that of our Founding Fathers, who fought on our own soil, and in our own fields and towns against Great Britain for a new nation and self-rule. Some survived to fight again in 1812.

The Greatest Generation won the war, wrote our Declaration of Independence and our Constitution, and founded a new nation. Truly, the Greatest Generation.

Zadalee Furlano
Lakewood, N.J.

DRUG-WARRING

Timothy Lynch's "War No More" (Feb. 5) suggests that we abandon the war on drugs because it has not been successful. Should we abandon the wars on murder, rape, arson, car theft, or assault because we haven't "won"?

His suggestion sounds more like liberal nonsense than conservative values. Nothing is worse in America at present than the misery caused by illegal drugs; nothing would be worse than to give them official sanction. Mr. Lynch refers to the problems "solved" when alcohol consumption became legal again. The "solution" was no solution; there are still millions of alcoholics.

All of these commodities are bad, but let's not confuse the issue. The solution is better education of our young, better interdiction of drugs from overseas, tougher penalties on drug pushers, and better treatment for users.

Jack L. Kime
Maryville, Ill.

Mr. Lynch's account of federal drug policies is flawless. Let's just hope our elected officials will start acting like leaders, and realize this "experiment" in prohibition is futile.

Brian Gralnick
via e-mail

CLASSIC KING

Florence King has given me many interludes of mirth over the years. But her column about the impact of historic events on kids and national eccentricities ("The Misanthrope's Corner," Jan. 22) achieves the status of a classic.

Rev. Gerald A. Buckley, O.P.
Ashland, Ore.

CLASSIC CONNERLY

For the first time in my (politically aware) life, I have the desire to comment on one of your contributors. Mr. Ward Connerly is a voice of reason that has given me hope that we may someday have unity of all races ("A Battle, and an Opportunity," Feb. 5). He correctly identifies today's "black leaders" for what they are: dividers, not uniters. Equality comes from being treated equally, and Mr. Connerly expresses this philosophy clearly for anyone who will listen. He may be in the minority at this moment, but if sanity is to prevail, he won't be for much longer.

B. K. Campbell
Gulfport, Miss.

BRAVE NEW WORLD

Oh, the horror, the horror that Dinesh D'Souza has conjured up ("Staying Human," Jan. 22). It gives me chills—the ghastly scenario of my husband and me sitting down to pick out our children's attributes. It takes us nine months to pick out a *name*.

We are three months into our fourth pregnancy, and we have no names because I don't want to start that fight yet. I can't imagine what it would take to pick out the entire child.

Emily Goodey
via e-mail

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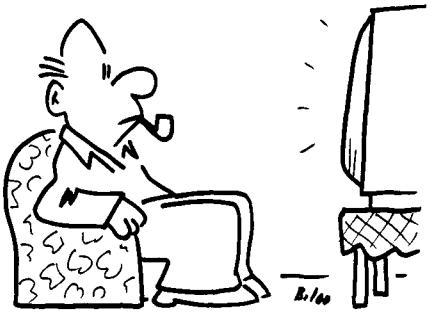
■ FOR THE RECORD ■

■ **Alan Greenspan**: "Should current economic weakness spread beyond what now appears likely, having a tax cut in place may, in fact, do noticeable good." . . . "Greenspan probably has more impact on the fate of a tax cut than the president of the United States," says **Mark A. Bloomfield** of American Council for Capital Formation, in *New York Times*. . . . Sen. **Zell Miller** (D., Ga.): "I agree with President **Bush** that the taxpayers are better judges of how to spend their own money than we are." . . . House Speaker **Dennis Hastert**: "Fiscal discipline combined with tax relief will keep our economy growing." . . . Bush removes District of Columbia license plates bearing slogan "Taxation Without Representation" from presidential limos. . . . OfficeMax donates 500 W keys and 100 keyboards to White House, following vandalism in last hours of **Clinton** administration, reports Fox News. . . . Bush taps NR contributor **John J. DiIulio Jr.** to head office of federal financing of faith-based charities. . . . **Ralph Reed** announces candidacy for chairman of Georgia GOP. . . . On second Sunday as president, Bush attends service at black church.

■ GOP strategist **Dan Schnur**, in *Los Angeles Times*: "Whether he wants to be or not, **Gray Davis** is the electricity governor. If he tames this challenge, he's a national candidate. If the crisis tames him, it's all gone." . . . Sen. **Paul Wellstone** (D., Minn.) says he will run for reelection next year, breaking term-limit pledge. **Paul Jacob** of U.S. Term Limits labels him a "partisan political hack you can't trust." . . . Former Rep. **Pat Schroeder**, on whether **Hillary Clinton** will run for president in 2004, in Chattanooga *Times Free Press*: "I doubt she'll run out and do anything risky." . . . Sen. Clinton presides over chamber for one hour, earning title "Madame President." . . . New York mayor **Rudy Giuliani** cancels meeting with Hillary over pardon of **Marc Rich**: "I think what the president did was an outrage." . . . West Virginia governor **Bob Wise** (D.), on pardon, in Associated Press interview: "This is terrible, and I totally disagree with the president's actions."

■ ABC's **Peter Jennings**, on independent counsel **Robert Ray**'s deal with Clinton: "It's a very sad, almost tragic way for the president to spend his last day in office." . . . Rep. **Henry Hyde** (R., Ill.): "The action taken today vindicates the House impeachment proceedings and reaffirms that our actions were in defense of the rule of law rather than merely a political initiative." . . . Chicago mayor **Richard M. Daley** suggests offering vouchers to parents for after-school programs: "My theory is



"The following program was filmed before a bipartisan audience."

that anything you do to help educate your child should be something that the government helps you with financially." . . . In *American Spectator*, **R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr.** comes out against the death penalty. As a result, **Tom Bethell** gives him this year's Strange New Respect award.

■ Ex-President Clinton, at Andrews Air Force Base following Bush inauguration: "When you leave the White House, you wonder if you'll ever draw a crowd again." . . . **Madeleine Albright**, on stepping down as secretary of state: "I will have to learn how to drive." . . . Former energy secretary **Bill Richardson** says he will probably run for governor of New Mexico next year. . . . **Al Gore**, in *New York Times*: "I'm not considering anything political right now, but I haven't ruled out thinking about such things later on." . . . **Will Marshall** of Progressive Policy Institute, on Gore campaign: "**Mondale** with a surplus." . . . **Sidney Blumenthal** plans to write White House memoir. . . . *Los Angeles Times* deletes line from **George Will** column on Clinton: "It is reasonable to believe that he was a rapist 15 years before becoming president."

■ Despite $40 million ad campaign, banks, stores, and consumers don't care for **Sacajawea** dollar coin. U.S. Mint director **Jay W. Johnson** refuses to admit failure: "I think it's a success because people love the dollar coin," he tells *Washington Post*. "They love it to death because when they find it, they keep it." . . . Chief Justice **William Rehnquist** discusses disputed presidential election of 1876, in which special commission including Supreme Court justices delivered victory to **Rutherford B. Hayes**: "Hayes was a better president than some of his detractors predicted, and the nation as a whole settled down to a more normal existence. . . . The political processes of the country had worked, admittedly in a rather unusual way, to avoid a serious crisis." . . . Air Force's Space Warfare Center holds military's first major war game focused on space, using conflict between United States and China in 2017 as scenario.

■ **Fidel Castro**, on Bush: "Someone very strange, with very little promise, has taken charge of the leadership of the great empire that we have as a neighbor." . . . Pakistan asks banks to freeze assets tied to at-large terrorist **Osama bin Laden**. . . . Liberia invites United Nations to monitor diamond sales, following charges Liberian diamond smuggling has financed civil war in Sierra Leone. . . . Russian Mir spacecraft will crash in ocean halfway between New Zealand and Chile. . . . Pope **John Paul II** picks 44 new cardinals in January.

■ **Jay Leno**: "**Jesse Jackson** was in Washington today, lobbying the Bush administration for an increase in the child tax credit." **NR**

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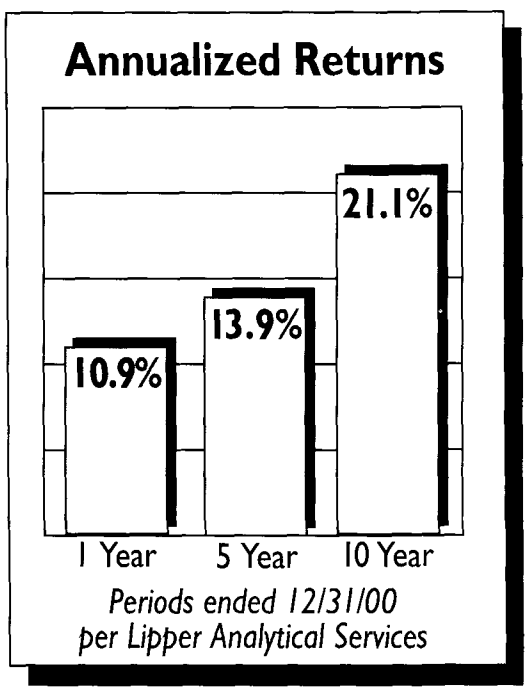

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THE WEEK

■ We always said you couldn't trust them with the silver; we didn't know to mean it literally.

■ George W. Bush's inaugural address was an impressive one. Even bitter-end chad-massagers like Hendrik Hertzberg of *The New Yorker* admitted that it was graceful and thoughtful. And at fourteen minutes, it was a welcome retreat from the average Clinton speech, with its bloat. There was another implicit rebuke of Clintonism in it, too: When Bush asked Americans to be "citizens, not spectators," this was typical civic-minded rhetoric; but when he asked them to be "citizens, not subjects," he was calling an end to eight years of sycophancy, legal double standards, and droit du seigneur. He wanted citizens to devote themselves to his compassionate conservative agenda: "Persistent poverty is unworthy of our nation's promise." Alexander Hamilton, one of the few poor-boy Founders, might have agreed; let us hope Bush's understanding of the dynamics of wealth-formation is as supple and hardheaded as his was. Bush ended by declaring that Americans are not the authors of their own story. That Author "fills time and eternity with His purpose. Yet His purpose is achieved in our duty . . ." Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State probably wanted those words blue-penciled, but he'll just have to take it to court.

■ Pro-lifers are, in the main, quite pleased with the Bush administration. They had pressed it to restore the Reagan administration's "Mexico City" policy, which denies foreign-aid funds to groups that perform or promote abortions overseas. Bush not only obliged, but did so on his first workday as president, the day of the annual March for Life. It was a powerful symbolic gesture. But not all doubts about the administration have been allayed. In his Senate testimony, Bush's nominee for attorney general, John Ashcroft, said that he would not ask the Supreme Court to rethink its abortion-on-demand jurisprudence. And a day before the inauguration, Laura Bush—who had kept mum on the subject all last year, and whom pro-lifers had been encouraged to think was one of them—declared herself opposed to overturning *Roe* v. *Wade*. Republicans may be moving toward a new position, one that seeks to restrict abortion in ways consistent with *Roe* but gives up on overturning it. But since *Roe* and its successor cases bar any serious restrictions on abortion, pro-lifers cannot accept that position. Nor should any pro-choicer who would rather be governed by the Constitution than by the Supreme Court. The happier interpretation of the comments by Ashcroft and Mrs. Bush is that Republicans will do the right things (e.g., Mexico City) even as they say the wrong ones. As Princeton University professor Robert P. George observed some years ago, on abortion Republicans reverse their usual pattern: They are all action and no talk.

■ A motif of the coverage of the new administration has been the bogus parallel to Bill Clinton's first days in office. Just as gays-in-the-military had gotten Clinton off to a rocky start, so Bush would be undone by his executive order on abortion. Or by the Ashcroft nomination. Or his tax cut. But the situations are different. The gays-in-the-military debate was bruising to Clinton because there had been no trial run: Congress had never seriously debated it, and the clueless Bush campaign of 1992 had not made an issue of Clinton's position. Clinton hurt himself further by passing a tax hike after campaigning on a tax cut. By contrast, official Washington has fought about overseas abortion funding for years, and George W. Bush defended his policies on abortion and taxes against Democratic attacks throughout the campaign. Bush may yet stumble, but nothing he has done so far has the potential to blow up in his face—much as the Washington press corps might wish it so.

■ The prospects for tax cuts, indeed, continue to improve. First Democratic senator Zell Miller of Georgia broke ranks to cosponsor the Bush tax-cut bill. Then Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan endorsed several of the premises behind Bush's tax cut: that the budget surpluses are indeed burgeoning, that the economy is growing slowly if at all. His own rationale for a tax cut was that, without one, the federal government will accumulate so much surplus money that it will retire all its debt and have to purchase private assets, which he rightly considers unwise. Greenspan's comments were welcome. But would he have said what he did if Al Gore were president? For that matter, would he have stuck his neck out had Bush not persevered with his tax-cut proposal through a year of negative coverage and congressional timorousness? Greenspan cast a vote of confidence not just in Bush's economic policy, but in his political strength.

■ The president will have much rougher sledding, however, on Social Security, not least because the Senate moved sharply to the left in the election. Here, too, he should not give up. The reform he proposed—letting individuals invest some of their contributions to the system—is a good, and popular, idea. Indeed, Bush should start campaigning for that reform now, with his tax bill. He has been curiously reluctant to push tax cuts that encourage investment. Although he supports abolishing the estate tax, a pro-investor move, he has not proposed a reduction in the capital-gains tax, or an expansion of IRAs and 401(k)s. Yet these policies, by helping people to gain experience managing their own investments, would build support for the Social Security reform. They would also pass Congress easily. Bush should endorse them, and establish himself as a champion of small investors.

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Europe—One Number for the New President to Call?

Timothy Garton Ash is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution.

While the United States has been trying to settle on a new president, the European Union (EU) has been trying to find a new structure. The new structure is necessary as the EU prepares to absorb the states of the eastern half of Europe, a historic undertaking that will eventually double the union's size. But **what kind of partner will the resulting EU-rope be for the United States?** Will this be a United States of Europe? Will there be one phone number that the U.S. president can call?

The EU summit in Nice in early December indicated the likely answer. In five days of extraordinary horse trading between the leaders of the current 15 member states, ending with a round of exhausted applause at 4:25 in the morning, the EU took significant steps toward both greater integration and enlargement. It agreed on the terms for a European Rapid Reaction Force to intervene in future Kosovos, which will serve as a complement to NATO.

The EU also agreed to more use of so-called qualified majority voting on a range of issues internal to the Union. The use of new voting weights was designed not just for existing members but for twelve countries, from Poland to Malta and Estonia to Romania, that are currently negotiating to join the union. This was the subject of the fiercest wrangling: Should Germany have more votes than France, or Spain than Poland? How should the balance be struck between the few large and the many small states in Europe? The bargaining, all conducted behind closed doors, reminded me of a modern Congress of Vienna.

A whole range of countries defended their national vetoes in particular fields: the French on cultural imports (against U.S. cultural hegemony), the Germans on asylum and immigration, the British, Swedes, Luxembourgeons on taxation, and so on.

All national governments in Europe fight fiercely for their national interests. Progress on the big, difficult issues is made by intergovernmental bargaining. European federalists, especially those in the European Parliament and the European Commission, have expressed disappointment at both the process and the result.

"And yet it moves," as Galileo famously remarked. In time, we will see a larger EU. Its member states will do a large number of things together, through supranational institutions, especially in trade and the regulation of economic life. There will also be smaller groups of member states that go further, through intergovernmental cooperation in particular areas. These include such vital matters as the single currency and the abolition of border controls, as well as enhanced environmental protection and foreign policy actions in response to specific crises. In short, **as the EU gets larger, the post-Nice EU will become more complex and polycentric,** with intergovernmental cooperation remaining as important as supranational integration.

So, will there be one phone number for the new U.S. president to call? No. Is that a bad thing? Not necessarily. Better to have a complex structure that works, and commands some minimum of consent from its peoples, than a simple one that doesn't.

— Timothy Garton Ash

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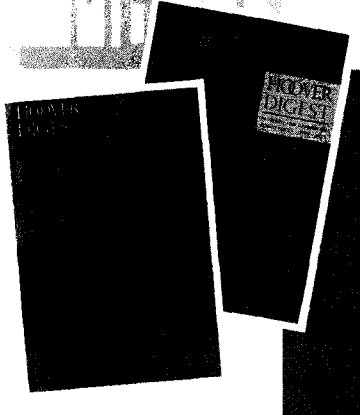

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■ During the campaign, Bush frequently promised that as president he would rally "armies of compassion" to minister to the needy. True to his word, in his first days in office he has launched a campaign designed to facilitate the work of private, and often religious, charities. Federal agencies are to avoid regulations that might hinder such groups; tax law will be changed to promote giving to them; and the religious character of a group will not bar its participation in federal programs to treat drug addiction, feed the hungry, etc. The president's initiative may accomplish two worthwhile objectives: improving the effectiveness of those federal programs, and correcting a misreading of the First Amendment that has too often led to official hostility to religion in public life. But neither accomplishment is guaranteed. While many religious charities are successful in transforming lives, many of them are, like their secular counterparts, too infused with the nonjudgmental ethos of the therapeutic culture to do so. And the danger that federal aid will bureaucratize and secularize religious groups must be guarded against, as Bush himself has recognized. Compassionate conservatism will have to be judged by its works.

■ In the case you missed his town-hall meetings broadcast live on CNN like a moonshot, John McCain the gutsy maverick is back! McCain-Feingold, his disastrous campaign-finance reform, may actually pass this year, although Bush may veto it if it fails to limit the political activities of unions, which extract dues from their members, then, essentially, hand them over to the Democratic National Committee. McCain maintains that his bill codifies the *Beck* decision, which held that union dues paid by non-members—who sometimes have to ante up to hold certain jobs, even though they aren't in a union—cannot be used for political purposes without their consent. *Beck* is just a first step, but McCain-Feingold appears to limit even it. The bill would, for instance, prohibit the expenditure of compulsory dues on "political activities unrelated to collective bargaining," language that is looser than that found in *Beck*-related court decisions—potentially almost anything is related to collective bargaining (the minimum wage, pension policy, etc.). Conservatives will try to bolster McCain-Feingold with more straightforward "paycheck protection" provisions, which would require unions to secure the prior consent of their members before spending their dues on Gephardt for Speaker. If they succeed, Democratic enthusiasm for reform, needless to say, will flag. So, in the end, McCain-Feingold may not be so bipartisan after all.

■ The liberal two-step on John Ashcroft, described in our last issue ("'Conservative' and 'Racist'," by Richard Lowry), sashays on in *The New Republic* and the *Washington Post*. Both tar Ashcroft with a number of positions or actions that they characterize as racist: opposing byzantine desegregation plans in St. Louis and Kansas City, and the nominations of Ronnie White and Bill Lann Lee; speaking at Bob Jones University, and to *Southern Partisan*. The *Post* admits that Ashcroft might have had legitimate policy goals in mind, and *TNR* even concedes that he might have been, here and there, right. But there are buts: "deliberately or not, he was also playing racial politics" (the *Post*); "It's not one position that matters, it's the totality" (*TNR*). But doesn't "playing racial politics" require the player to be doing it deliberately? And how many positions make a totality? Ten? Two? However many *The New Republic* says? What even relatively reasonable liberals do not acknowledge is that the most effectual form of racism in this country for years has been the regime of quotas; that racial operators who profit from it accuse any critic of being just like Bull Connor; and that soft-minded liberals give the race men cover. Not as a totality, just most of the time.

■ Is it any surprise that one of John Ashcroft's major excoriators has been his sometime colleague Ted Kennedy, leveling the charge of extremism and threatening a filibuster? Conservatives often think of Sen. Kennedy as a marginal figure, because he never reached the White House; because age has rendered him faintly comic; and because it's hard to bear down on someone for over thirty years. Never make that mistake. Edward Kennedy is a powerful senator with an active and industrious staff, which stakes out the leftmost viable position on almost every issue. At crucial moments he can bring his full weight to bear with an unreasoning venom that compensates for his lack of eloquence. Just ask Judge Bork.

■ The Ashcroft hearings revealed Chuck Schumer, senior U.S. senator from New York, to be one of the leading advocates of the following theory: Any decision that goes against a black person, or against the opinions of black "leaders," for any stated reason at all, must be inspired by "racism." Well, well. Among the companies bidding for the right to run a commuter airline in upstate New York was DC-Air, owned by black billionaire Robert Johnson. Sen. Schumer did not support the DC-Air bid, favoring instead two other companies not owned by black people. Why those two companies and not Johnson's? "Perhaps it is because [they are run] by white businesspersons," opined Johnson. Schumer, of all people, should know that to be called a "racist" nowadays, you don't need to be shown to hold any particular beliefs, or to have committed any identifiable act of discrimination. You just need to have turned down a bid from a black-owned company, or voted against a black judicial nominee, *for any reason whatsoever*. We wonder how much longer this word "racist" can retain its strange power: how much longer before people get up and walk away—or just burst out laughing—when anyone tries to use it.

■ Bill Clinton got away, and Al Gore got away, and John Huang got away, and James Riady got away, and . . . well, it seems like everybody associated with the Democratic fundraising scandals of the 1990s got away with wrist-slaps or less. But now it appears the feds are finally going after a big fish. Even though the Justice Department in Washington was never much interested, federal prosecutors in New York have indicted Ron Carey, former president of the Teamsters Union, charging him with lying to a grand jury investigating his 1996 reelection campaign. According to the indictment, Carey siphoned union money to Democratic interest groups—

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$885,000 in all—in return for contributions from those groups to Carey's campaign. In a separate trial in November 1999, there was testimony that Carey and Terry McAuliffe—Clinton's confidante and pick to be the next chief of the Democratic National Committee—came up with a similar plan in which Carey would donate Teamster money to Democrats if McAuliffe could find a big donor for Carey's campaign. McAuliffe has not been charged with any wrongdoing in that case. Still, it's clear that prosecutors are on the trail of the unions' role in recent Democratic campaigns—at last.

■ Tina Brown, First Groupie, welcomed the Clintons to Gotham with a gush in the *New York Observer*: "They are natural New Yorkers. I think it's definitely the place for them." Washington "is just too small . . ." Yes, let us hope it is definitely the place for them—the New York of "Intelligencer," Page Six, Cindy Adams, and Michael Musto; of eating out, gossip, celebrity photos, gossip, canoodling, pratfalls, and gossip. Bill, stout and tumescent, will roll from corner table to dinner party (count your spoons!), while the Senator will hobnob with Charlie Rangel and other hack politicos, looking every day more and more like Mme Defarge (the tipping point will come when Mrs. Clinton inspires her first drag act). Maybe they'll run into Monica. Only in New York, kids, only in New York.

■ Irving Kristol famously said that a neoconservative is a liberal who has been mugged by reality. Recently, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. appeared at a press conference in a Harlem church, together with outgoing HUD secretary Andrew Cuomo, who is running for governor, and union boss Dennis Rivera. Pursuing Puerto Rican votes, they announced a lawsuit to stop Navy testing on the island of Vieques, off Puerto Rico. During these virtuous orisons, Kennedy's jacket, containing his wallet and car keys . . . disappeared. Kennedy was undaunted: "I have no complaints. I've made my contribution to the neighborhood economy now." His first appearance in *Commentary* is on hold.

■ Britain's House of Lords voted overwhelmingly to allow the cloning of human embryos up to 14 days old for purposes of medical experimentation. Scientists cheered the news, relieved that the law would no longer have, as we say in America, a "chilling effect" on useful research. For those who recognize that human embryos are human beings, the decision is more troubling. It is bad enough that the law will allow humans to be experimented on, let alone that they will be brought into being for the purpose. The advance of cloning is already having a chilling effect on human dignity.

■ It's already against the law for federal dollars to fund research in which human embryos are destroyed. Yet the Clinton administration, in another of its legal evasions, found a way around this ban two years ago. The National Institutes of Health published guidelines allowing scientists who receive government support to work on the leftover parts of destroyed embryos, so long as they weren't involved in the actual embryonic destruction that made the parts available in the first place. (See "Hard Cell," by John J. Miller, April 5, 1999.) It was like saying a person could take cash from a woman's wallet, provided somebody else previously had stolen her purse. President Bush should revoke the NIH's deliberate misreading of the law.

■ The last time the United Nations' panel on climate change was in the news, it was releasing a cautious report about the possibility of global warming—along with a dire summary of the report that predicted blazing temperatures and widespread flooding. The media went with the misleading summary, and largely ignored the protests of many scientists involved about the misrepresentation of their work. The same story has just happened again, with the added wrinkle that the headline-writers fell for the ruse twice: right before the election, when a draft of the summary hit the papers, and again in January, when it was released in final form. The new summary speculates that by 2100, temperatures will rise by as much as ten degrees Fahrenheit and sea levels by three feet. It is the worst scenario of 35 considered, and it is, as ever, based on computer models that have been unable to predict the past, let alone the future. Which makes it a poor guide for planning the world's energy-use patterns for the next century, as the Kyoto Protocol would have us do.

■ Falun Gong is not the only movement keeping Communist China's leaders awake at night. In 1987, a man named Zhang Hongbao established the "Zhong Gong" movement, designed to promote health and inner peace by means of herbal medicine and traditional meditation techniques. No mere peasant crackpot from the boondocks, Zhang was a graduate of Beijing's most prestigious institute of business management, and set about building a nationwide network of enterprises—clinics, schools, factories, and research institutes—on the most modern business principles, taking care to register them all in accordance with Chinese law. Zhang's operation was much more NutraLife than Heaven's Gate. When the Chinese authorities became aware of the movement's popularity, however, they cracked down. All of those enterprises—legally owned, legally registered—were closed. Their assets, around $100 million, disappeared into the pockets of powerful offi-

Oops

Jesse Jackson, who conferred
With Bill Clinton when he erred,
Offering pastoral balm
With the customary psalm,
Struggles in his own morass—
An exertion that will pass
Faster than the morning mists
If I know my journalists.

—W. H. von Dreele

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- ✓**Are you hearing the truth—or a lie? Watch for these critical tip-offs.**
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- ✓**Ten often-heard expressions—that *you* should *never say.***
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cials. Their employees were hustled off to labor camps. (This last was a no-brainer for the authorities. Chinese law requires enterprises to keep accurate employee records, and Zhang had complied.) Zhang fled for his life, first to Thailand, then to Guam. As we go to print, he is in prison in that U.S. territory, awaiting a Feb. 2 asylum hearing before a U.S. judge. The Chinese have demanded his extradition back to China to face a "trial" in a Chinese "court" under Chinese "law." This is the first test of the Bush/Powell administration's willingness to kowtow to the despots of Beijing. By the time you read this, we may know whether the test was passed.

■ Just 100 years ago, on January 22, 1901, Queen Victoria died. Britain's longest-reigning sovereign, she gave her name to an era in which the world was dominated, and policed, by a single superpower possessed of Anglo-Saxon constitutional traditions, open and reflective habits of thought, a solidly Judeo-Christian moral code, and primarily mercantile interests. That era was followed by a long cycle of wars and revolutions, bringing untold misery to untold millions. Now, once again, it is our great good fortune to be living in a world rather like Victoria's—similarly dominated, by a similar power. For how long, this time, can the balancing act be maintained?

■ For several hundred years, one of the characteristic sights of the English countryside has been the fox hunt: red-coated riders at full gallop over field, hedge, and brook, following the hounds in pursuit of one of nature's fastest and most cunning predators. The sport has soaked deep into English culture: Hunting prints adorn the walls of ten thousand pubs, songs like "D'ye Ken John Peel?" have been taught to English schoolchildren for generations, and English literature has abundantly celebrated the drama and ritual of the chase, from the hunt-addicted Squire Western in *Tom Jones*, to the novels of R. S. Surtees, to John Masefield's wonderful narrative poem "Reynard the Fox." But such a wealth of color and tradition cannot, of course, be allowed to stand in Tony Blair's forward-looking, hygienic, politically correct New Britain. On January 17, the House of Commons, dominated by Blair's Labour party, voted for a total ban on fox hunting. For procedural reasons, the ban is not likely to become law, but if it does, an entirely predictable result will follow. British farmers, who regard foxes as a major pest, and who permit them to live only so that they can be hunted, will go after them with shotgun, trap, and poison, and the English fox will quickly become extinct. Since everyone involved in the debate knows this, those members of Parliament who voted the ban have declared, in essence, that they will destroy Reynard in order to save him. Ah, what a wonderful, flexible thing is the progressive conscience!

■ One of the great creeping plagues of our time, to be resisted by all true conservatives, is decimalization. That old, natural, intuitive, and thoroughly absorbed ways of measuring things should give way to what one wise American lawmaker called "those damn dots" must be an outrage to all right-thinking people. It is thus with great sadness that we report the conversion of share prices on the New York Stock Exchange from quarters, eighths, and sixteenths to decimals, under orders from the Securities and Exchange Commission. AMEX immediately followed suit; NASDAQ will do so in April. The rationales given are thin: The SEC claims that decimalization will narrow bid-ask spreads, cutting investor costs. On the other hand, traders who carried out a trial decimalization program reported that "[m]ore manpower is required to trade stocks in pennies rather than fractions because prices jump around more frequently." Since computers can perfectly well handle the original fractions, and are already programmed to do so, the real reason for the change can only have been to feed the tidy-minded impulses of government bureaucrats. Thus another small area of eccentricity, individuality, and tradition is scrubbed away. What a shiny, uniform, gleaming Brave New World we shall soon have! But who will want to live in it?

EDUCATION

A Gentleman's C, Maybe

On one subject, President Bush has already kept his promise to "change the tone" in Washington: that of federal education policy. His $48 billion bill has been received warmly, with few echoes of the rancorous debates of the past. Republicans are no longer trying to dismantle the Department of Education, and Democrats are more willing than they once were to consider holding teachers and schools accountable for results. Democrats have expressed concern about the bill's limited voucher proposal, but said they can work with Bush. The president and his aides have repeatedly hinted that they might drop the offending proposal in the interest of bipartisanship. Harmony prevails.

Too bad. The direction of federal education policy is very much in need of debating, not least within the Republican party. For years, a tension has existed within conservatism between centralizers who want to raise academic standards at the state and federal levels, and pluralists who want to increase competition among schools and devolve power to parents. Often, the centralizers have been neoconservatives, and the pluralists libertarians. By and large, conservatives have split the difference. They have favored tests and standards, for instance, as a means of giving parents information rather than of regulating school districts.

Bush's proposal has several good components: its promotion of phonics, its consolidation of various federal programs, its reduction of federal regulations on what states can do with federal grants. But it tilts too far in the direction of standards and does too little to increase competition. Bush would give low-income parents "exit vouchers" to escape failing schools, true, but they would be worth very little money and be given out only after three years of certified failure. The schools would get a "fair chance" to reform even if children were not getting a fair chance to learn. Where similar plans have been tried, very few schools have been designated as failures. And while Bush proposes to expand education savings accounts, the accounts

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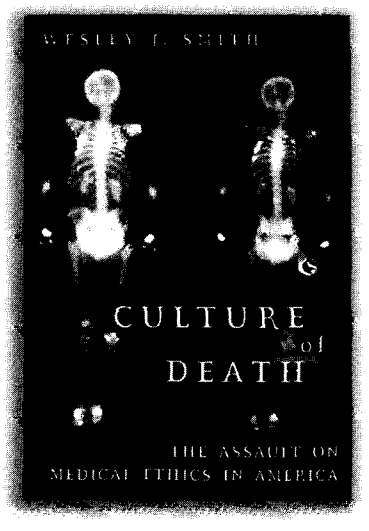
would remain fairly weak: Only the interest on them escapes double taxation.

Republicans who support Bush's approach say that moving faster on school choice is politically unrealistic: Voucher proposals bombed at the polls in California and Michigan in November, didn't they? But a strategy that leans heavily on raising standards, without much competition, is politically unrealistic too. It ignores how easily standards can be, and have been, co-opted, how easy they are to manipulate politically. Bush's plan is supposed to make it easier for parents to see how their schools are doing. But when governors complained about a much weaker tool of comparison during the administration of Bush's father—the "wall chart" that ranked states' performances—the administration got rid of it. George W. Bush's plan expands the federal role in education but still carefully respects limits: States are allowed to come up with their own testing regimes so long as they meet federal requirements. But those limits may not last. If a Democrat were to become president in 2005, he would find it easier to make a left-wing monstrosity out of Bush's regulatory structure than he would to create one from scratch.

Bush is eager to build on the educational success stories of men like Roderick Paige, the Houston superintendent he appointed to run the Education Department. But there's a reason such successes are not replicated throughout the public-school system: There are no incentives within that system to do so. The reason Bush has to create an artificial "accountability system" by bureaucratic means is that there is no free market in which accountability would occur naturally.

It is true that Washington is not about to enact a revolutionary voucher plan, and we're not asking Bush to push for one. Indeed, we will not shed a tear if, as he has signaled, he abandons the exit vouchers in his plan. They set up an unwinnable fight: Democrats are making demagogic arguments against a complicated and stingy plan that Bush seems disinclined to defend. It would be better by far for school-choice advocates to fight for vouchers for the children of Washington, D.C. The D.C. debate is one that concentrates on specific children in lavishly funded, inarguably rotten schools. Democrats are on the defensive when they debate it: When President Clinton vetoed a bill for school choice in D.C., he did it with none of his usual fanfare. Indeed, conservative activists may want to consider a ballot initiative on school choice in D.C., where it might well pass—and give the cause a moral boost. With respect to school choice in other places, the federal government should get out of the way. All federal aid for low-income schoolchildren should go where state dollars go: If a state provides vouchers, let the federal money become part of the voucher; if not, not.

It is unfashionable to insist that the federal role in education should be kept small, but still correct. Distant bureaucracies are not likely, in the long run, to keep local schools accountable. Bush's education proposal therefore moves in the wrong direction. It will probably pass with strong bipartisan support. We'd vote no.



Culture of Death

The Assault on Medical Ethics in America

by Wesley J. Smith

When his teenaged son Christopher–brain-damaged in an auto accident–developed a 106-degree fever following weeks of unconsciousness, John Campbell asked the attending physician for help. The doctor's response: Why bother? The boy's life was effectively over. Refusing to accept this death sentence, Campbell threatened legal action and the doctor finally relented. With treatment, Christopher's temperature subsided almost immediately. Soon he regained consciousness, and today he is learning to walk again.

This chilling case history is one of many described in Wesley J. Smith's new book **Culture of Death: The Assault on Medical Ethics in America.** In it, Smith goes behind the scenes of our health care system to show how doctors, relying on "Futile Care Theory," withdraw desired treatment. And how this is just one of the ominous developments resulting from the theories of a self-proclaimed elite of "bioethicists." In their brave new worldview, cognitively disabled patients can be dehydrated to death; organs can be harvested from the terminally ill and disabled, and animals receive greater protection in medical experiments than people.

After accompanying Wesley Smith on this dark journey through the doctors' offices, operating rooms, and bioethics seminars where the "right to die" is slowly being transformed into the duty to die, the reader will agree that we stand at a medical and cultural crossroads–and that we must embrace a new philosophy of human and medical rights if we are to have any chance of reasserting the sanctity of life.

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THE CLINTONITES

Of Class and Trash

IN ancient history, the Huns and the Mongols would loot and rampage when they arrived. The Clintons, doing them one better, have done so on the way out.

President Clinton used the power to pardon to bestow legal kisses on a collection of rogues as disreputable as himself. Marc Rich, a commodities trader who was indicted for evading $48 million in taxes, got the most ink. Rich was prosecuted by Rudy Giuliani—not always an indication of guilt. But rather than stand trial, Rich fled to Switzerland; his former wife, Denise, who stayed home, has given over a million bucks to the Clintons and other Democrats. Also pardoned: Susan "Hot Pants" McDougal, former Whitewater partner who went to jail rather than rat (or even testify in favor of her Bill); Henry Cisneros, former cabinet member who lied to the FBI about payments to his mistress; six crooks in the penumbra of former cabinet member Mike Espy; four Hasidic Jews who scammed the government for education aid, but whose sect supported Hillary Clinton in her Senate race; Tom Bhakta, an Arkansas tax cheat whose wife and kids gave Hillary's campaign $4,000, and whose lawyer also represented her commodities trader. Oh, yes, Clinton also freed a woman Weatherman caught with an arsenal of bombs and guns. At least he didn't spring Leonard Peltier and Jonathan Pollard. Did they give money to Rick Lazio?

The Clintons gave themselves a little tip in the form of $190,000 worth of gifts, which should help furnish the houses in Washington and Chappaqua and the Manhattan offices. While the HillBillies made off with the goodies, their departing aides fouled the White House nest for incoming Bushies. Pornographic messages were left on computers and answering machines, and a few phone and fax lines were cut. The Bush White House, not wanting to be distracted by the story, scaled down its initial account of the damages. What group of adults would have left any?

John Kennedy famously said of Richard Nixon that he had "no class." The Clintons do have a class. David Brooks coined the word "bobos" (short for bourgeois bohemians) to describe successful children of the baby boom who think the world is their oyster. But the bobos, in his rendering, however witless and presumptuous they are, do work hard for all their toys. The Clintons run for office, and steal. Call them bobo trash.

CLINTON

The Deal

INDEPENDENT COUNSEL Robert Ray's deal with Bill Clinton feels like one of the former president's Oval Office assignations: incomplete; a letdown. It wrings from Clinton the merest of confessions: the word "false" to characterize his Paula Jones deposition ("I tried to walk a fine line between acting lawfully and testifying falsely. I now recognize that I did not fully accomplish this goal . . ." You don't say?). It allows Clinton to continue to insist that he didn't lie—he "knowingly violated" court rules and gave answers that "were false," but didn't knowingly give false answers. It doesn't force him to own up specifically to lying before a federal grand jury, the offense for which he was impeached. In short, it provides another example of all the self-justifying word-chopping and excuse-making that has characterized Clinton's reaction to his lies from the beginning. All that said, it is not clear that Ray had any better options.

Clinton couldn't have been allowed actually to go on trial, which was why NR argued for a preemptive pardon last issue. Ray's deal is the functional equivalent of that. Of course, it is not Ray's role as independent counsel—duty bound to pursue and prosecute wrongdoing in the Lewinsky matter—to make such a political call. But it is somehow appropriate that the last independent counsel—holding an extra-constitutional office that has helped bollix up the nation's politics for the last twenty years—should end on a procedurally false note. In any case, once the political process had run its course with Clinton's impeachment, and once a trial had been ruled out, there wasn't much left to be done—it's simply impossible to force someone to be decent. Honesty has a cleansing quality: *The truth shall set you free*. But Clinton will never know it. The rest of his life will be spent torturing logic and fact, to try to convince himself and others that, among other things, it is possible for a person to have sex with someone who is simultaneously not having sex. Enjoy.

CULTURE WATCH

Action Jackson

REDEMPTION works fast these days. In the interval between NR's last issue and this, Jesse Jackson has fallen, risen, and gone back to work. A few aspects of the quickest story ever told should be remembered.

Jackson and his mistress, Karin Stanford, did one important thing right, by saving the life of their child. Jackson has been pro-abortion ever since he first ran for president in 1984. But before that, he had called abortion "murder." He had reason to do so, since his own mother, a teenager who became pregnant by a married neighbor, considered aborting him until a minister talked her out of it. How many of Jackson's fellows (millions of them black) have gone to the pyre of Moloch with his acquiescence? But when the choice came to him and his lover, they chose life. He is, it turns out, truly "personally opposed."

Miss Stanford's life could be a modern *Rake's Progress*. Before going to work for PUSH, she had a job teaching political science and black studies in Georgia. The scholarly work that first caught Jackson's eye was a book she had written on his effect on foreign policy—truly a weighty subject. What more fitting reward for the affirmative-action track than the attentions of a race hustler?

The public has no right to know everything about public figures. Libel laws once recognized "the peace of families" as

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an untouchable area, even when the families belonged to politicians and other celebrities. If hypocrisy is the tribute that vice pays to virtue, it is also a real tribute. But when damaging truths come out, consequences should follow. Jackson's rubber-ball rebound reflects a larger pathology in American religion. It used to be a bit of Protestant folk wisdom that the confessional allowed Catholics to purge themselves cheaply and sin again. This view reflected, not only bigotry and ignorance, but a determination to preserve one's moral uprightness. These days, emotional Protestantism, black and white, has made its own version of the once-dreaded confessional: the public confession. The sinner squirts a few tears, the congregation shouts a few "Hallelujahs," and everyone is back in business. *Oprah* is simply a secularized version of this cheap rite.

The question that seems custom-made for the modern media's eye is, of course, where did the money come from? Miss Stanford got a generous severance package, lives in a posh West Coast house, and gets monthly child-support payments. Jackson has been sloshing in money, siphoned from the large white businesses he intimidates and the small black businesses he chooses to cut in, for years. Where does it come from? Where does it go? The press can hunt these facts down when it chooses; the *Washington Post* took a bloodhound's interest in the finances of the Christian Coalition. Race and ideology, however, will surely delay Jackson's day of reckoning.

Jackson had an undoubted vein of eloquence, and in his first year or so on the national stage he showed a freedom from reflexive liberal postures and remedies, even if that freedom sometimes led him to the side of Fidel Castro, or Louis Farrakhan. That spark of promise long ago went out. His rhetoric has been eroded by repetition; all that is left is parody. Maybe his children will redeem his lineage; he can no longer redeem himself.

■ NOTES & ASIDES ■

■ Dear Bill: . . . On another subject, I have detached myself from the technology revolution, but I'm attracted back by this report from the Internet on the most sought-after economists writing. I will, of course, write to them, pointing out that Buckley is a major literary and political figure and accordingly doesn't make the grade.

My health continues on the mildly reprehensible side, but the medical profession assures me that time will work its wonders. There are many reasons why that great profession must be regarded with a certain detachment.

Kitty joins me in the best to you both and all.

Yours faithfully,
John Kenneth Galbraith
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Ken: Well, by the time Milton is your age, surely he will edge you out in the race among living economists. On the race among economists past or present, I am left wondering what Aristotle had that you don't have. Advise. Splendid news that your health is improving. Pat joins in affectionate greetings to Kitty and you.

Bill

Top 10 Economists on the Net

1. Karl Marx
2. Adam Smith
3. John Maynard Keynes
4. David Ricardo
5. Aristotle
6. John Kenneth Galbraith
7. Vilfredo Pareto
8. Frederick Engels
9. Milton Friedman
10. Thomas Malthus

Top 10 Living Economists on the Net

1. John Kenneth Galbraith
2. Milton Friedman
3. Paul Krugman
4. Amartya Sen
5. Gerard Debreu
6. Joseph Stiglitz
7. Paul Samuelson
8. James Tobin
9. John Harsanyi
10. Lester Thurow

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: At one point in the America-Held-Hostage-to-the-Rule-of-Trial-Lawyers Ordeal, some talking-head said, "things like dimples."

My mind wandered to Fr. Hopkins's poem glorifying dappled things and I wrote the following parody.

Do you think it worthy of your "Notes & Asides"? Do you think I should get a life?

As the Court Jester—Danny Kaye, that is, not Jesse J.—might say: The ballot with a dimple is a vote for Gore, that's simple; the card marked for Bush will be tossed out as mush!

Count every parody and parody every count!

(with apologies to Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.)

PRIED BOOTY

Glory be to God for dimpled things—
For cards of invented votes all liberal created;
For 'spose holes all in a row on ballots we rim;
Fresh-auger hole Chad like-falls; some blackenings;
Red-tape pitted & pierced—folded, spindled, and mutilated;
And all lawyer brigades, their briefs and babble and hymn.

All things counter, original, spare, estranged;
Whatever is pregnant, bulging (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers votes whose duty is deranged;
Raze him.

Yours,
Thomas M. Comerford
Dallas, Tex.

—WFB

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■ POLITICS ■

The McDougal Pardon

If you knew Susan like he knows Susan

BYRON YORK

THE way Hickman Ewing sees it, there's a certain circularity in Bill Clinton's decision to pardon Susan McDougal, the ex-president's old partner in the Whitewater land deal. After being convicted of four Whitewater felonies, McDougal was held in contempt by Judge Susan Webber Wright for refusing to testify about Clinton's role in the affair. A few years later, Clinton himself was held in contempt by Judge Wright for lying under oath in the Paula Jones lawsuit. "So what happened," says Ewing, a longtime prosecutor in the independent counsel's office, "is a person who was found in contempt pardoned another person who was found in contempt by the same judge for refusing to answer questions about the person who pardoned her." In the legal Latin, Ewing explains, "a *contemnor* pardoned a fellow *contemnor*."

Ewing's objections aside, public reaction to the McDougal pardon was surprisingly muted. Clinton's critics—and many of his supporters—were far more upset by another last-minute presidential pardon, the one given to fugitive tax-evader Marc Rich, whose ex-wife had showered the Clintons with campaign contributions and personal gifts. But which case was more troubling? Rich appeared to purchase his pardon with $1.1 million in soft money, plus two coffee tables and two chairs. McDougal paid a price far more dear: She spent a year and a half in jail rather than tell prosecutors what she knew about Clinton's past. In the final reckoning, she may have done more damage to the administration of justice—with the president's support—than Marc Rich ever contemplated.

"I'd call it pardon psychosis, like waiting for your kid to be born," says Mark Geragos, McDougal's lawyer, describing the tension he and his client felt in the weeks leading up to the pardon. Unlike Rich, who mounted a years-long crusade for a pardon, McDougal had always insisted she didn't want one. But in early December, she changed her mind, a development Geragos attributes to "a woman's prerogative." With that, her lawyer began a last-minute campaign to win clemency. "I made calls, I wrote letters, I had other people write letters," Geragos recalls, although he refuses to say who wrote those letters or otherwise joined him in the pardon effort.

Bill rescues his damsel, by Roman Genn

For all his work, one thing Geragos didn't do was go through the usual procedure of notifying the Justice Department of the pardon request. Instead, he went straight to the White House, where the president also disregarded normal practice by choosing not to seek input from prosecutors who handled the case. For McDougal, that would have been the office of independent counsel, hardly on chummy terms with the Clinton White House. "We were not consulted," Ewing says dryly.

Had such a consultation taken place, the independent counsel might easily have made a detailed and compelling argument against a pardon. McDougal, they could have pointed out, has never admitted any wrongdoing, and has instead engaged in years of fighting prosecution, refusing to cooperate, and denouncing law enforcement. Her pattern of behavior began in 1995, when she was charged with Whitewater felonies that included mail fraud, misapplication of funds, making false entries in a Small Business Administration report, and making false statements. "I am not going to testify against anybody," McDougal told reporters after pleading not guilty. "They can forget it."

Her defiance began a long, running battle with independent counsel Kenneth Starr's prosecutors. With virtually airtight evidence of McDougal's guilt, Starr's lawyers believed she might change her mind if faced with a guilty verdict and time in prison. "The whole point of that prosecution, aside from prosecuting the underlying offense, was to obtain new witnesses," recalls Jackie Bennett, the former deputy independent counsel. "That's the way it worked with [McDougal's late ex-husband] James McDougal. People cut their deals." In May 1996, a federal jury convicted Susan McDougal on four felony counts, and in August, she was sentenced to two years in prison.

But she still wasn't talking, although she hinted broadly that she might if offered the right deal. On September 3, Judge Wright ordered McDougal to appear before the grand jury. Wright gave McDougal complete immunity for any testimony she might give; the only charges she might face would be for perjury, if she lied to the grand jury, or for contempt, if she refused to testify.

Which is precisely what she did. McDougal insisted that she be allowed to read a statement before answering any questions. When prosecutors refused, she fell silent. When they asked whether Bill Clinton testified truthfully at her trial, she said, "I need to read my statement." Judge Wright gave McDougal a few days to reconsider and then ordered her jailed for contempt. Surely that would bring her around.

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You deserve a factual look at...

Those "Palestinian Refugees"

Who are they, what is the real story?

One of the sticking points in the off/on negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians is that of the so-called "refugees", the children and mostly grandchildren of those who left Israel during the 1948 War of Independence. Yasser Arafat insists that there can be no peace unless those "refugees" are allowed to "return" to Israel.

What are the facts?

650,000 "refugees" swell to 5 million. You have heard about those "Palestinian refugees", who claim "right of return" to Israel. Of course, virtually none of them ever lived in Israel -- they are the children and mostly grandchildren of those who fled in 1948. The total number of those who fled in 1948 is estimated to have been about 650,000. Now the number who wish to return has swollen to almost five million!

How did this exodus come about? In 1948, on the day of the proclamation of the State of Israel, five Arab armies invaded the new country from all sides. In frightful radio broadcasts, they urged the Arabs living there to leave, so that the invading armies could operate without interference. They could return after the expected quick victory in that "holy war", get their property back -- *and* that of the Jews. Things turned out differently. The invading armies were defeated. Those who had left became refugees -- people without a country. Those who stayed, and their children, are full-fledged citizens of the state of Israel.

> The Arabs are committed not to allow any "non-believers" to be in control of any part of the Middle East. That is the real cause of the "Palestinian refugee problem".

These so-called "Palestinian refugees" have not been allowed to settle in the "indivisible Arab nation". They have been supported in camps since 1948. So far, close to $1.8 billion has been spent on their maintenance. No end is in sight. Who pays for that? You guessed it: Through UNWRA Relief, the United States contributes more than 60% of the total cost.

The Arab countries, among them some of the richest in the world who fritter away their enormous fortunes on undreamed luxuries, are satisfied to leave their Arab brethren in those miserable camps. They have never contributed a penny to their maintenance.

Another side of the "refugee" story. But there is another side to the "refugee" story. Little is heard of the 800,000 Jewish refugees from Arab countries, who fled those countries to settle in the newly formed Jewish State of Israel. Every one of those refugees was immediately accepted, resettled, taken care of, and given full citizenship by the fledgling, impoverished, and embattled Jewish State. There never has been, and there certainly is not now, a Jewish "refugee" camp in Israel or anywhere else.

The Arab "refugees" who fled Israel left little wealth and little history, since most of them had not come to "Palestine" until Jewish settlers opened economic opportunities in what had been a desolate country for centuries. But the Jews of Arab lands have a history going back thousands of years. When forced to flee, they left behind land, wealth, and a long history. They arrived in Israel, quite literally only "with their shirts on their backs." They now make up almost 60% of the vibrant and productive population of Israel. What have the Arabs, the richest people in the world, done with <u>their</u> "refugees" in more than 50 years? They have kept them in misery, on the dole of the world, and have taught their hopeless youth the "skills" of suicide missions and of slaughtering defenseless and unarmed men, women, and children.

If the Arab nations truly decided to make peace with Israel and to put an end to the century-long strife, they could easily accomplish it by accepting the "Palestinian refugees" in their countries and, just as Israel did with Jewish refugees from Arab countries, integrating them into their societies and making useful citizens of them. In fact, acceptance in their countries might also be offered to the Israeli Arabs, who, despite enjoying a higher standard of living, education, and health than Arabs in any of the surrounding countries and despite having the same civil rights as Israeli Jews, are not happy to live in a Jewish state.

Population transfers are common, especially in the wake of wars. They have been practiced throughout history. In 1923, Greece and Turkey agreed to the resettlement of 2 million Greeks and 800,000 Turks; in 1945, the resettlement of 3 million Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia was arranged. Following the collapse of its North African empire, France accepted close to 1.5 million people. More than 12 million (!) Muslims and Hindus were exchanged between India and Pakistan. Israel has recognized this historical necessity. The "Arab Nation", with its enormous wealth and vast under-populated lands, has stubbornly refused to face facts.

It is clear that the "Palestinian refugee problem" is a red herring, kept alive by the Arab nations for their political purposes, and with cynical disregard for the great number of impoverished people who live in these camps. It is being kept alive and is being used as a "non-negotiable" bargaining chip, for the purpose of destroying the State of Israel -- a feat that the Arabs have attempted several times by military means, but which has always ended in disastrous failure. Apart from the unsolvable social problems it would create, the introduction of, say, even one-half of the 5 million who claim to be "refugees" would, with one stroke, dramatically alter the demographic makeup of the country and would inevitably destroy the Jewish State. That is of course the whole idea behind the demand for the "return of the refugees". If the Arab nations were willing to solve the "refugee problem", the legitimacy of Israel could no longer be questioned. But that is not acceptable to the Arabs. They are firmly committed not to allow Israel or any "non-believers" to be in control of any part of the Middle East. It is that, and that alone, which is the real cause of the "Palestinian refugee problem".

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It didn't. And McDougal's resolve to stay silent was no doubt strengthened just a few weeks later, when Bill Clinton appeared on *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*. "Susan McDougal told a federal judge in Little Rock the other day the reason she was refusing to testify before a grand jury is she believed Kenneth Starr, the independent counsel, 'was out to get the Clintons,'" Lehrer said to the president. "Do you personally believe that's what this is all about, to get you and Mrs. Clinton?"

"Isn't it obvious?" Clinton answered.

"You obviously believe that, right?" Lehrer asked again.

"Isn't it obvious?" Clinton repeated.

Lehrer then asked whether Clinton would consider pardoning the McDougals. "I've given no consideration to that," Clinton answered. "And you know, their cases are still on appeal. And I would—my position would be that their cases should be handled like others, they should go through—there's a regular process for that, and I have regular meetings on that, and I review those cases as they come up after there's an evaluation done by the Justice Department. And that's how I think it should be handled."

The message was mildly worded but unmistakable: Clinton would not rule out a pardon for Susan McDougal. "It was obvious to me that he was holding out the prospect of a pardon to her and was encouraging her to hang tough," says Mark Barrett, the associate independent counsel who eventually prosecuted McDougal for contempt. "We always knew that was a likely prospect." With Clinton's tacit approval, McDougal stayed quiet—and jailed—for the rest of 1996 and all of 1997.

■

Marc Rich ran away from the law. Susan McDougal chose to stay home and thumb her nose.

■

By March 1998, she had served 18 months, the maximum allowed for coercive detention for contempt. Instead of being released, however, she immediately began serving her two-year Whitewater sentence. But events would eventually bring her back in front of the grand jury. Prosecutors had found a Whitewater-era check for $5,081, written on McDougal's account and marked with the words "Payoff Clinton" in her handwriting. Starr's lawyers wanted to know whether the check had anything to do with a loan the president had testified he knew nothing about.

"I will not answer any question you make to me because I believe you're conflicted and you have no right to ask me," McDougal told prosecutor Julie Myers at the start of the grand-jury session. "Mr. Starr should resign. That's my only answer to you."

"Ms. McDougal, what did you mean by the notation, 'Payoff Clinton'?" Myers tried.

"I don't believe your office has the right to ask me any questions," McDougal said.

It was hard to imagine a more clear-cut case of contempt of court. In May 1998, Starr decided to indict McDougal for criminal contempt and obstruction of justice. To say there was bad blood between the two sides was something of an understatement. "She was daring us to take it on," remembers Mark Barrett. "I'm not saying we indicted because we got angry and rose to the bait, but there was that subtext to it. This was a legitimate investigation. We were asking her legitimate questions. Her rights were protected through an immunity order. Nobody was asking her to lie."

While she awaited trial on contempt charges, a federal judge released McDougal from prison after she had served just three and a half months of her two-year Whitewater sentence. Then her contempt trial was delayed so she could face embezzlement charges in California (she was acquitted). McDougal finally went on trial in Little Rock in March 1999. A month later, the jury deadlocked on both contempt charges and acquitted her on the obstruction-of-justice charge. The independent counsel decided not to try her again, and Susan McDougal was finally free from Whitewater.

There has been speculation for years that Clinton would pardon McDougal—but it didn't come until the morning of January 20, just two hours before Clinton left office. The next day, the new ex-president, explaining his decisions in several controversial cases, told reporters, "You're not saying that these people didn't commit the offense. You're saying they paid, they paid in full, and they've been out long enough after their sentence to show they're good citizens, so they ought to have a chance to get full citizenship."

How that applies to McDougal is not entirely clear. Yes, she paid a price—three and a half months in jail for Whitewater, and 18 months for refusing to talk. But she has never admitted any wrongdoing, never expressed any remorse, and never stopped condemning the prosecutors who tried her case. Marc Rich showed a certain amount of respect for the law by running away from it. Susan McDougal chose to stay home and thumb her nose.

But it's all over now. Clinton is out of office, telling anyone who'll listen that Whitewater was "bogus." The independent counsel's office is finishing up its business; as this article goes to press, even the veteran Hickman Ewing is leaving to go home to Memphis. And Susan McDougal has her pardon. We'll never know what might have happened if she had cooperated with prosecutors. Bill Clinton made sure of that. **NR**

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NATIONAL REVIEW online

"American conservatives are not accustomed to being called hip, cutting edge, highly personable, communal, and funny, but that is the recipe behind NationalReview.com's secret sauce. . . . NRO succeeds because it is less a zine than it is an online bull session, a living, breathing (dare we say organic and communal?) complement to the print mag's older demographic and biweekly cycle. With 12 to 15 short pieces going up throughout the day, it has the feel of a live town square where a dozen or so conservative columnists react to the day's news . . ."

—min's New Media Report

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■ POLITICS II ■

Church (Groups) and State

The problem with the faith-based bit

KATE O'BEIRNE

PRESIDENT BUSH's decision to create a new White House office of faith-based initiatives comes from the success of such initiatives in Texas. But it still requires quite a leap of faith on the part of conservatives: There is a legitimate concern that federal subsidies—with their strings attached—will actually have a *harmful* effect on religious groups.

In Texas, Bush's efforts to increase the role of small faith-based groups in tackling big social problems sparked a great deal of contention. Liberals claimed to fear the establishment of a theocracy, as well as the dismantling of government programs; conservatives worried that public funds would place limits on the independence of the religious groups. Bush's willingness to take his Texas fight to the national arena reflects his belief in the program's success—and his faith in the ability of religious organizations to change the destructive behavior of needy individuals.

There are, in fact, persuasive examples of how faith-based efforts have transformed the lives of people afflicted with such chronic problems as drug addiction and homelessness. But these examples are invariably accompanied by stories about the government's efforts to throttle the faith-based programs with regulations. In Bush's first year as governor, for example, the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse threatened to shut down a faith-based drug-treatment program for violating a host of state rules, including a requirement that counselors be licensed. Bush backed the private program and implemented a plan that allows for private accreditation of religious organizations that run social-welfare programs.

He also made good use of the "charitable choice" legislation Congress enacted in 1996. Before that year, only strictly secular programs could receive federal funds; the new legislation sought to end discrimination against religious groups solely because they were religious, and this fit neatly with the "compassionate conservatism" Bush espoused at the state level and on the national campaign trail—where Bush pledged that his administration, in its efforts to help the needy, would "look first to faith-based organizations, charities, and community groups that have shown their ability to save and change lives."

The first challenge for President Bush will be to find enough faith-based groups devoted to spiritual renewal and character transformation to illustrate the idea's potential; the great majority of religious-sounding social-welfare programs don't actually have a religious character.

The government spends over $400 billion on antipoverty programs, many of which are administered by secular non-

A Doctor's "Confession" about Diabetes

(SPECIAL) – Here's important news for anyone with diabetes. A remarkable book is now available that reveals medically tested principles that can help normalize blood sugar naturally...and greatly improve the complications associated with diabetes. People report **better vision, more energy, faster healing, regained feeling in their feet**, as well as a reduction of various risk factors associated with other diseases.

It's called the *"Diabetes Improvement Program"* and it was researched, developed and written by a leading nutrition specialist. It shows you exactly how nature can activate your body's built-in healers once you start eating the right combination of foods. It can work for both Type I and Type II diabetes and people report it has helped reduce their insulin resistance. It can give diabetics control of their lives and a feeling of satisfaction that comes from having normal blood sugar profiles.

The results speak for themselves. The *"Diabetes Improvement Program"* is based on research that many doctors may not be aware of yet. It tells you which delicious foods to eat and which to avoid. It also warns you of the potential danger of certain so-called "diabetes" diets. Diabetics have written letters to the publisher calling this book "very outstanding"..."a tremendous help"...and saying it made "a difference in my life." The *"Diabetes Improvement Program"* is based on documented scientific principles that can help:

- **Eliminate ketones and give you more abundant energy**
- **Make blood sugar levels go from High Risk to Normal**
- **Stimulate scratches and scrapes to heal faster**
- **Improve eyesight**
- **Improve your balance**
- **Help numb feet regain a level of feeling**
- **Reverse neuropathy and resultant heel ulcers**

Improvement may be seen in other areas as well, such as **lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol** and **reduced triglyceride levels**. There may also be a reduction of other risk factors associated with: **heart attacks, stroke, retinopathy, kidney damage**.

What's more, it may help improve **short term memory** and make you feel **more alert** and **no longer chronically tired**. Improvements of **double vision** or *diplopia* may also be experienced.

If you or someone you know have diabetes, this could be the most important book you'll ever read. As part of a special introductory offer, right now you can order a special press run of the *"Diabetes Improvement Program"* for only $12.95 plus $2.00 shipping. It comes with a 90 day money back guarantee. If you are not 100% satisfied, simply return it for a full refund...no questions asked.

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profit organizations, while the private sector contributes about $20 billion to helping the needy. Private efforts are typically indistinguishable from their value-free public counterparts; in the trenches of the war on poverty, there aren't that many explicitly spiritual warriors.

The most common antipoverty activity of most churches is running food banks, which focus—just as government programs do—on meeting clients' immediate needs instead of trying to transform their characters. All faith-based programs aren't created alike; indiscriminately providing public funds to those that lack a specifically religious component will merely foster a parallel, private-sector version of the government programs that have long failed to transform the lives of the poor. One of Bush's top advisers on the faith-based initiative explains that its architects recognize the need to begin with modest expectations. "There is a significant note of realism," he says gently, "about the need to build capacity."

Those church groups that insist most strongly on the religious element of their mission to serve the poor will be wariest of Bush's initiative. While alarmed secularists warn that we must be protected from government-sponsored religion, it is equally important that vibrant religious groups be protected from the government. Catholic Charities—one of the nation's largest social-welfare groups—contracts with government welfare agencies to deliver social services, and is scrupulously secular in dealing with its needy clients. The Salvation Army puts up a wall of separation between its social outreach—which includes a spiritual dimension—and its publicly funded programs, where Bible reading and prayer meetings are strictly forbidden. Smaller groups that consider their spiritual mission intrinsic to their social outreach will have to be reassured that if they take government money in order to transform others, they will not end up being transformed themselves.

Bush's compassionate-conservative guru, Marvin Olasky, argues that the most important thing government can do to encourage faith-based groups to help the poor is get out of the way. It appears that Bush's troubleshooters at the agency level are prepared to follow Olasky's guidance, and ride herd on unfriendly bureaucrats intent on imposing irrelevant federal regulations. But the government will still be paying the piper: Will spiritual tunes be allowed?

In Texas, Bush heeded Olasky's warnings that the government must be careful not to distort the mission of faith-based groups receiving public money. Bush now proposes to permit taxpayers who don't itemize their deductions to deduct charitable donations, and this is the best method of preserving the independence of church groups; under his proposal, the government's role would be limited to certifying the eligibility of an organization.

The greatest risk of corrupting the mission of religious charitable groups would be posed by a grant program that permits bureaucrats too much discretion to discriminate among applicants, and too much authority to dictate services. Olasky warns that religious groups should demand a pledge that government won't distort their religious character, and that they should never accept public funds to pay for core functions or overhead. In short, it's essential that religious grantees remain independent enough to be able to walk away from their government benefactors.

Bush's faith-based initiative is far more controversial than his education agenda or tax-cut plan, because it moves far beyond routine Republican fare into the thorny thicket of church-state relations, and seeks a very delicate balance between impermissibly promoting sectarian interests and irreparably damaging the independence of religious charities. Bush is taking on a formidable array of opponents: credentialed experts who howl at the methods of some spiritual social workers (e.g., the assertion that "drug addiction is not a disease, it's a sin"), secularists who accuse him of wanting to be "pastor in chief," liberal religious organizations devoted to lobbying for more government programs, and government unions that fear private-sector competition. And he is waging this fight on behalf of faith-based groups that are themselves ambivalent about accepting government aid.

Bush's commitment is, therefore, risky politics as well as risky policy. His conviction—unshakable—that this new initiative will fly must depend on the faith he puts in his Co-pilot. **NR**

■ **POLITICS III** ■

What Now, Lifers?

Ditch partial-birth

JOHN J. MILLER

PRO-LIFERS, one might think, have never had it so good. "As you know, I campaigned as a pro-life candidate," George W. Bush reminded the country shortly before his inauguration. On January 22, his first weekday in office, Bush banned aid to international groups that promote abortion abroad. The same day, tens of thousands gathered in Washington to participate in the March for Life. They hailed Bush's move, and their cheers resounded—it was the annual event's biggest crowd in recent memory. The new secretary of health and human services, former Wisconsin governor Tommy Thompson, is pro-life. The abortion rate is down nationwide. And poll support is as strong as ever: Americans are about as likely to call themselves pro-life (45 percent) as pro-choice (47 percent), according to a Gallup survey last fall. (In years past, the pro-choice label enjoyed as much as a 23-point advantage.) A *Los Angeles Times* poll in June found that 65 percent of the public believed that second-trimester abortions should be outlawed. Pro-life candidates continue to benefit from their stand: Among the 7 percent of voters who say they care deeply about abortion, Bush trounced Al Gore, 61 percent to 30 percent, according to Democratic pollster Mark Penn.

So what should the pro-life movement do now? It should suspend the most successful political strategy it has ever had: the drive to ban partial-birth abortions.

The mere proposal of such a ban was, politically, a smashing success. "It's the only example we have of a pro-life legislative initiative moving public opinion," says Princeton University's Robert George. It has compelled the media, at least occasionally, to describe in some

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detail what Supreme Court justice Sandra Day O'Connor has called "a rather gruesome procedure." And it gave the pro-life movement a rallying point during the eight wilderness years of President Clinton.

But the pro-life movement has squeezed everything it can out of partial-birth abortion. To begin with, its value was primarily symbolic. In almost all cases, a woman slated to receive a partial-birth abortion could also get an abortion another way. Symbolism shouldn't be underrated; but the symbolism of partial-birth abortion could now end up cutting *against* pro-lifers. The effort to end the practice suffered a major defeat last summer when the Supreme Court struck down a Nebraska law that served as a test case for restrictions that had been passed in nearly half the states. This was a demoralizing moment for pro-lifers, who had struggled for years to achieve what would in substance have been a rather modest gain.

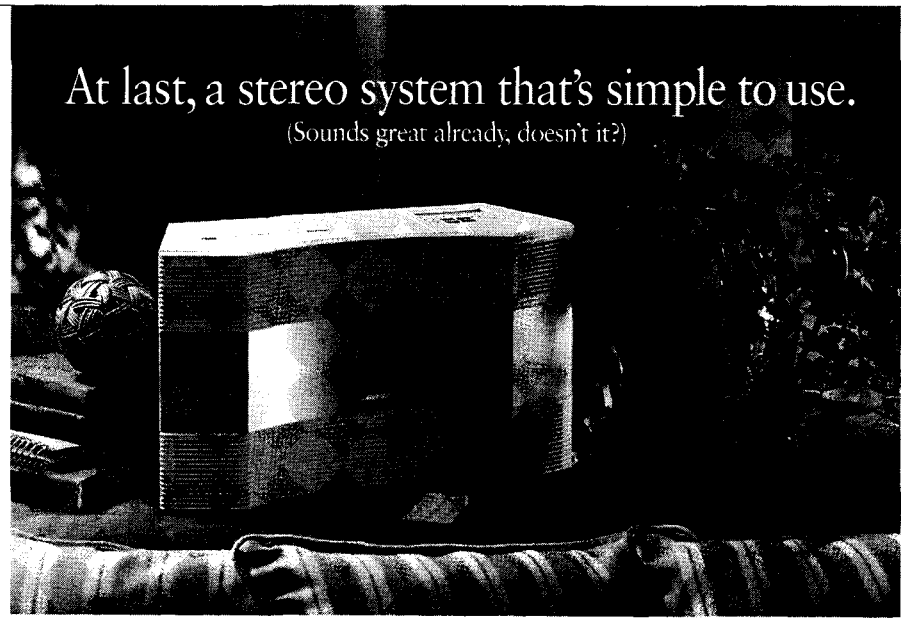
The political temptation has been to forge ahead anyway. Banning partial-birth abortion remains attractive to pro-life strategists because it regularly wins almost two-thirds approval in polls. As recently as last fall, it gave pro-life candidates an appealing way to talk about abortion before a divided public. In fact, it was one of the few routes Bush would use to approach anything like specificity on the subject; during his first debate with Gore, Bush actually raised the issue himself.

The pro-life movement has squeezed everything it can out of partial-birth abortion.

Yet emphasizing partial-birth abortion was a curious choice. "Bush led the grass roots to believe partial-birth abortion would be a top item on his agenda," says Teresa R. Wagner of the Family Research Council. "I was a bit perplexed by that." Congress twice passed a ban, which Clinton vetoed both times. The pro-life grass roots may now expect Congress to send the same bill to Bush's desk for a signature, and soon.

But that would be a mistake. The courts would slap an injunction on the ban immediately, and then they would review a law almost identical to the one they struck down just last year. The main difference would be that Congress would have passed it, rather than a state legislature—and this difference would hardly impress the judiciary. The only way it might pass Supreme Court scrutiny is if it included a "health-of-the-mother" exception broad enough to neuter its ability to reduce abortions. This would have the additional harmful effect of encoding precedent-setting language that would actually make meaningful pro-life legislation harder to pass in the future.

This is not what pro-lifers need right now. And they have had some dispiriting



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news recently: During his confirmation hearings, attorney general-designate John Ashcroft said the Supreme Court's rulings on abortion are "the settled law of the land," and added, "I don't think it's the agenda of the president-elect of the United States to seek an opportunity to overturn *Roe*." He wasn't speaking off the cuff; these words were carefully prepared by the Bush transition team, and are sure

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The movement should now dedicate itself to passing an abortion-survivor law.

■

to be read back to the first Supreme Court nominee Bush sends to the Senate: "Do you agree with Attorney General Ashcroft that *Roe* is 'the settled law of the land'?" Then there was Laura Bush's statement on the *Today* show that "I don't think that [*Roe*] should be overturned." The pro-life movement was eager to have a Republican First Lady who shares their views; but if there's a litmus test for determining who is pro-life, opposition to *Roe* is a pretty good one. Perhaps Mrs. Bush, like many Americans, is confused about what overturning *Roe* would accomplish. In any event, her statement was hardly encouraging to pro-lifers—who would do well to start looking for some concrete accomplishments.

There are several reasonable steps the Bush team could take in the short term. They could reverse Clinton-era guidelines that allow research resulting in the destruction of human embryos, and push for increased penalties for crimes committed against pregnant women, as well as a prohibition on taking minors across state lines for the purpose of evading abortion restrictions.

What's more, the pro-life movement as a whole should now dedicate itself to passing an abortion-survivor law on the federal level, and should do so with the same intensity it recently devoted to the partial-birth-abortion ban. The Born-Alive Infants Protection Act would protect children who live through an abortion procedure. There have been several reports of this actually happening; the children involved died when they were denied medical attention. Forty-one states already have laws along these lines.

If a federal abortion-survivor law were to save even a single life, it would be worthwhile. It would also serve another important function: It would acknowledge the rights of children as independent from those of their mothers. Pro-choice politicians have been very successful at focusing on the health of women in the context of abortion, without ever making reference to the interests of their children. Virtually everyone this side of NARAL agrees that the line between abortion and infanticide must be drawn somewhere; the whole partial-birth-abortion effort was a failed attempt to do this. Delivering explicit rights to babies who somehow outlive abortions is a reasonable place to start. It's not even a new idea; Hadley Arkes first proposed it on these pages more than twelve years ago ("How to Roll Back *Roe*," October 28, 1988). Since then, Arkes has been a dogged advocate of this legislation, calling it a "modest first step." It's a modest step the pro-life movement should now take. Call it a baby step. **NR**

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■ **INTERNATIONAL LAW** ■

One Man's War Criminal . . .

A mad leftist project, revealed

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

LAST weekend in New York, it was all but impossible to buy the latest issue of *Harper's*. The magazine contained the first half of Christopher Hitchens's vast "indictment" of Henry Kissinger as a war criminal, for carrying out a foreign policy of which Hitchens disapproves; and it had sold out in the first 15 or so places I checked. A second installment is forthcoming in the March issue, but having read the first, I predict that the next issue will not sell out. Hitchens writes gracefully, as always, but his organization of the complicated material is rambling, tortuous, and confused.

Not without reason, however—for clarity would be fatal to his argument. Insofar as his thesis can be briefly summed up, it is that Kissinger can and should be prosecuted for carrying out policies that are now recognized under the "Pinochet precedent" as war crimes or crimes against humanity. His indictment has several weaknesses: In some cases, the actions denounced by Hitchens are not war crimes; in others, Kissinger did not commit them; in still others, both.

A wonderful example of this last was pointed out by columnist George Jonas in Canada's *National Post*. Jonas noted that Hitchens cited Kissinger's mere contemplation of bombing North Vietnamese dikes as evidence of a "regnant mentality" disposed seriously to consider committing war crimes. But destroying dikes to weaken North Vietnam's economy would have been not a war crime, but an attack on a legitimate military target. The British destroyed German dams in World War II, and the NATO bombing of Serbia in the Kosovo war also targeted its economic infrastructure. If Hitchens believes such acts to be war crimes, why

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is he targeting Kissinger (who, after all, *rejected* them) rather than Tony Blair and Bill Clinton, who carried them out? The idea is absurd. Hitchens can nonetheless content himself with having invented a new international felony: a "war-thought-crime."

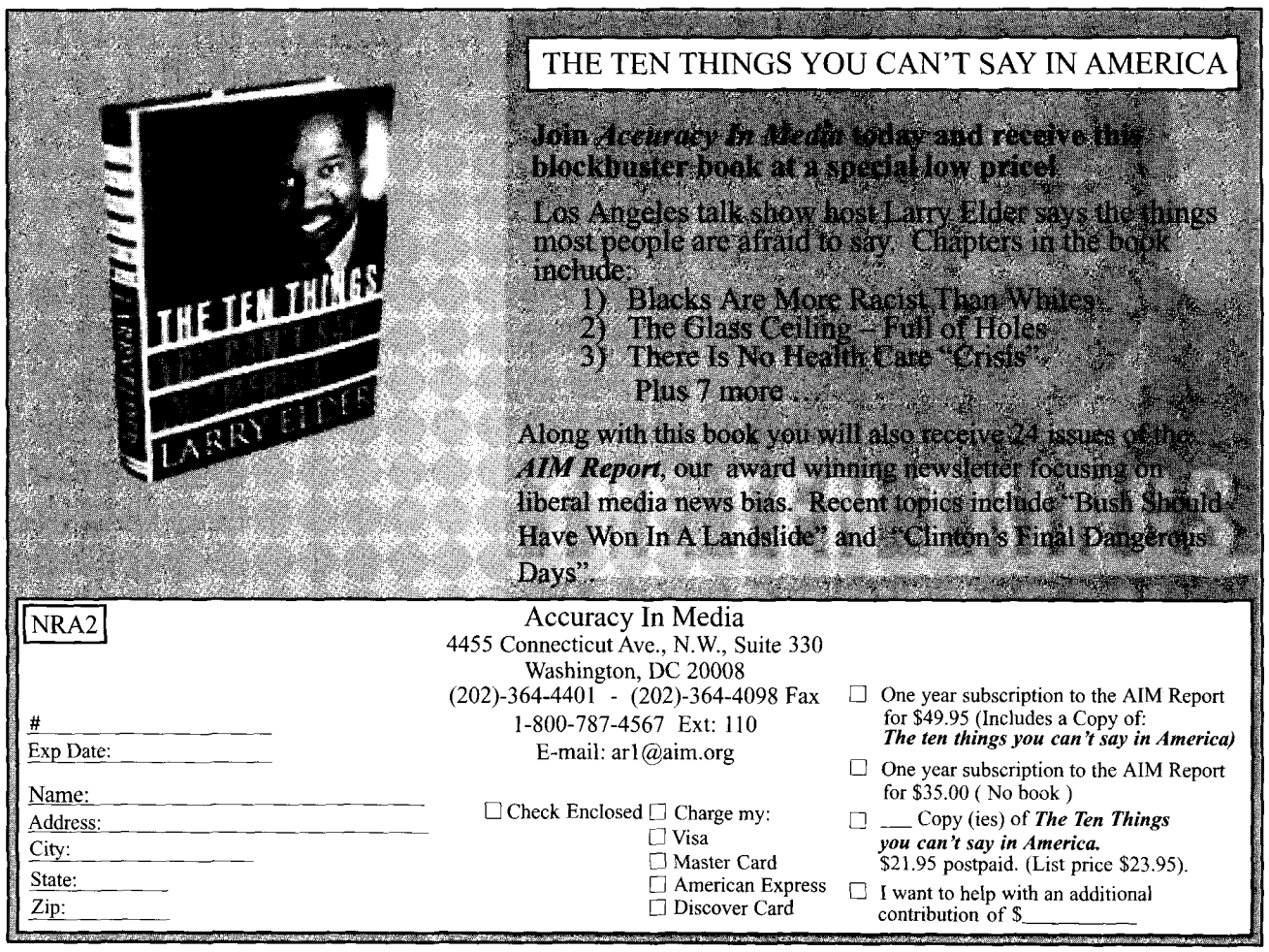
When it comes to actions that Kissinger actually took—or, more precisely, for which he bore a partial responsibility as a member of the Nixon administration—the indictment becomes nothing more than restaging of leftist anti-Vietnam nostalgia. Kissinger is accused, for instance, of "treating two whole countries—Laos and Cambodia—as if they were disposable hamlets." This accusation should, instead, be leveled at the North Vietnamese, who took over entire portions of Cambodia and used them as bases to supply their forces and attack U.S. and South Vietnamese troops. Objecting to this intrusion on their neutrality, the Cambodians invited the U.S. to evict the North Vietnamese. What subsequently happened to the Cambodian people was a tragedy—but it was one begun by the North Vietnamese and completed by their sometime allies, the Khmer Rouge, who were in fact guilty of monumental crimes against humanity.

Hitchens sees the entire American prosecution of the Vietnam War after October 1968 as, in itself, a gigantic war crime—and all who died between October 1968 and April 1975 as victims crying out to The Hague for vengeance. Or, as he writes: "Kissinger had to know that every casualty in Indochina after 1968 was avoidable."

Even if that were so, it would not justify placing on Kissinger the entire blame for decisions taken by a democratically elected government. But it is *not* so. Hitchens's whole indictment on the Vietnam issue rests on the delusion that the North Vietnamese were willing to reach a genuine compromise at the Paris peace talks in October 1968. Given that assumption, he charges Kissinger with two crimes: being part of a Republican plot to encourage President Thieu of South Vietnam to resist the peace deal so that Nixon would win the 1968 election; and then continuing a needless war for partisan political purposes.

Neither charge survives examination. To begin with, the 1968 "bombing pause" that Hitchens supposes would have brought about peace was itself a partisan decision designed to win the election for Hubert Humphrey—as the memoirs of Anatoly Dobrynin, among other Soviet sources, reveal: "With the presidential election only days away and Humphrey trailing in the public opinion polls largely because of his identification with Johnson's conduct of the war, [Secretary of State Dean] Rusk telephoned on October 31 to inform me that the president would announce the complete cessation of bombing North Vietnam the following day."

Further, the eventual 1972–3 peace agreement was itself made possible only by U.S. and South Vietnamese military successes. The agreement was a de facto recognition by Hanoi in 1972 that they were not certain to win—a recognition they had been unwilling to make in 1968. Those who died in the intervening years



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were the victims not of Kissinger, but of North Vietnamese aggression.

Hitchens's indictment, then, is a slow-motion replay of the radical Left's standard grievances of the 1970s. Why, then, does Hitchens deserve the thanks of all sensible people for slogging his way through it?

Hitchens's article appeared in a major magazine. It apparently sold out, at least in Manhattan. And it has been treated respectfully by some mainstream news organizations—notably an approving article in the January 30 *Washington Post* by Peter Carlson (whose irony, alas, contains more lead than a church roof). Here—placed before a large and influential audience—is proof that the idea of arresting and putting on trial a distinguished former secretary of state is no longer a sort of disgusting joke, but actually thinkable. Indeed, as Jeremy Rabkin, a Cornell specialist in international law, points out, the FBI issued a discreet warning a year ago to former American officials not to visit countries where they might be seized for trial—and there were some West European countries on the list. The proposed International Criminal Court even encourages such trials in its preamble, which states that "it is the duty of every State to exercise its jurisdiction over those responsible for international crimes." The rules under which former officials might be tried are disturbingly flexible and reliant on shifting definitions of "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity." Pinochet, for instance, was tried under the U.N. Torture Convention because it provided the British court with the convenient justification of "universal jurisdiction"—even though the charge was based on the beating of a suspect in a Chilean police station, of which incident Pinochet was almost certainly unaware and which occurred when he was on the verge of leaving power and had every incentive not to murder bystanders.

This, in short, is why we must be grateful to Hitchens: He has given us an advance copy of the indictment some future secretary of state might face—a rehash of the indignant platitudes of the journalistic Left, dressed up in legal jargon by lawyers from Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch.

We have been very adequately warned. We owe Hitchens a hearty meal, before our own execution. **NR**

■ **HOLLYWOOD** ■

Like, Strike, Dude

The Hollywood writer-worker

ROB LONG

THE only thing worse than being in a meeting with three writers is being in a meeting with 300 writers, which unfortunately describes a meeting of the Writers Guild of America, West.

Every few years, the WGA—the putative trade union of screenwriters—suffers an institutional nervous breakdown as its members, made up entirely of writers and therefore unable to agree on anything, attempt to agree on the terms of a new contract with the studios. The current contract expires on May 1, and for the past few months Hollywood has been thick with strike talk.

The sticking point invariably centers around some new profit source exploited by the studios—DVD sales, say, or pay-per-view satellite broadcasts—that they have neglected to pass on to the writer. The working writers—and that number is considerably smaller than 100 percent of the membership of the WGA, West—tend to be philosophical about these issues. Sure, we get angry and bitter. But we're writers. We were angry and bitter *before* we got into this business. In some cases I could mention, anger and bitterness were the primary inspiration to saddle up and move to Los Angeles in the first place. I know one guy who became a television writer simply because it afforded him the opportunity to write on a cop show and name all the strippers, crack whores, and nude female corpses after his mother.

The non-working writers are a more querulous lot. Some are retired and living in affluent boredom. For them, a messy writers strike is an exercise in self-dramatics. What fun to glide over to the picket line in their BMWs and Bentleys and get into a Clifford Odets-style working-class dustup! And how nice to be able to do it in temperate Los Angeles, so warm and dry and generously supplied with upscale lunch spots.

The second group of non-working writers are the unemployeds. These are writers who haven't sold a script or drawn a writer's paycheck in years, but who remain passionately involved members of the guild and its hardest-to-satisfy voting bloc. For some reason, years of unemployment do not lead to difficult personal decisions ("I must stop dreaming of success and riches. I must stop talking to my friends about my next big script sale. I must realize that my job at Blockbuster is not just 'temporary' or a 'great place to people-watch and get material,' but, instead, my true livelihood, and I will begin to treat it as such by arriving on time and in uniform, and not waste a customer's time criticizing his rental choices"), but rather to a stubborn and highly irrelevant obsession with the writer's potential share of hypothetical ancillary revenue generated by a script that hasn't been written, and if written won't be sold unless the writer is represented by an agent, who won't sign him because—and this is crucial—*his scripts do not sell.* Did I mention that this is the largest segment of the voting population of the WGA?

Freed from the burden of actually having to show up to a job every day, they look to the occasional strike to round out their social calendar, to catch up with old friends on the picket line. And since all writers crave excuses for not writing, what better excuse for being unproductive than a strike? Writing? Not me. I'm *honoring my brother and sister scribes!* I'm *taking part in the labor movement!* Lazy? Untalented? Nope. Just committed to social justice. Rarely has sitting on your ass outside the studio gates, carrying a picket sign while eating a ham sandwich, ever seemed so glamorous.

So, the working writers—especially the young ones—hate strike talk. A strike means television- and movie-production halts. Paychecks stop coming. Writers with cushy studio deals (ahem) find that their contracts enter something called "suspend and extend," which

Mr. Long is an NR contributing editor and a non-unemployed Hollywood television writer.

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means, essentially, no money until the strike is over, which won't happen until the unemployeds are satisfied that if they somehow write a script that somehow gets sold and somehow gets produced and somehow makes enough money to somehow generate "ancillary revenue," they'll get their fair share.

"Suspend and extend" ripples across the Hollywood economic landscape, as the cash flow pinches to a trickle. Without the regular greasing of a studio paycheck, a lot of writers and producers and executives (did I mention that *everyone's* paycheck stops?) will start hearing the squeaks and screeches of money trouble. First go the guys who clean the pool and wax the cars. Then the personal trainers, the dog walkers, the yoga dudes. Next, the housekeepers and nannies and car leases. Ultimately, the five-figure mortgages turn into polite calls from the mortgage companies, which turn into not-so-polite calls from the mortgage companies, which turn into frantic calls to the real-estate agents, which turn into a collapse in the real-estate market as all denizens try to unload their debt bombs at once.

The Hollywood Writer by Roman Genn

Because, at base, the entire industry shares the same cut-it-close paycheck-to-paycheck goofy optimism of the unemployed writer, there are a lot of folks out here who aren't sitting on the commonsense cash hoard. Because hypothetical riches are so easy to generate, why bother to conserve actual cash? Why save for a rainy day? Out here it rains only ten days a year.

This year, the outstanding contract issues center around the old favorite—ancillary revenue—and a newcomer, something called "respect."

"Respect Issues," sometimes referred to with the even more ludicrous "Writer's Integrity Issues," are essentially protocol items (the writer should be invited to the set; the writer should be notified if any other writers are assigned to the same project; the writer should have 'meaningful consultation' on casting, script changes, marketing, etc.; the writer should be invited to the press junkets) that, while nice gestures, are impossible to buy a bag of groceries with. The key item in the "respect" category is the passionate hatred every writer feels for the "possessory credit" that directors routinely take on movies. "A film by Rob Reiner," say, or "A film by Some Guy Who Directed Music Videos Five Minutes Ago" sticks in our craw because it suggests that the script somehow wrote itself, or worse, that it was written by Rob Reiner. The frequent and unjustified use of the possessory credit relegates the writer to secondary status in the movie-making hierarchy.

But in the *television* industry, the hierarchy is reversed. On my side of the business, it is the writer who runs the show. The writer gets the big money and the fat studio deal and all of the credit. In the television business, a writer isn't just a writer; he's a *writer-producer*. The writer not only creates the show, he casts it and hires the director. There's a reason some of the most talented screenwriters around choose to work in the television business. That's where they have the most power. When the Writers Guild complains about the way writers are treated in the feature-film business, the Directors Guild (rightly) responds by complaining about the equally bad (actually, much worse) treatment of directors in the television business.

In fact, the economic and "respect" issues that divide the writers and the studios also divide the feature-film writers from the television writers. A television writer who plays his cards right can do very, very well, thank you (I will explain it some day—after the Bush tax cut). What then, for him, is the point of the Writers Guild at all?

The health plan. Everything is covered, including thirty days every so often at the Betty Ford clinic, which seems generous to the point of encouragement. In a town like this one, filled with vege-

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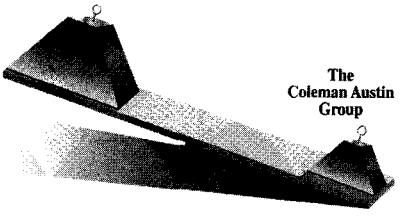

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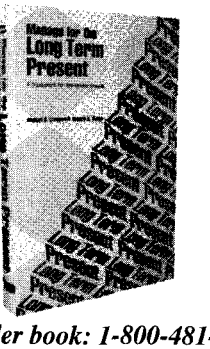

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tarians, exercise addicts, healthy livers, and hypochondriacs—and these groups intersect in a big way—handing someone a medical-care blank check is like handing someone a hobby. And let's face it: Since the bulk of the WGA membership is made up of retired or unemployed writers, they need *something* to do. I'd rather they spent their days at the gastroenterologist than walking the picket line.

Years ago, a few months after I landed my first writing job in Hollywood, the membership of the WGA was seriously considering a strike. The general meeting that year was my first, and it was an event so chaotic and anger-charged that it was hard for me to believe it was taking place in Southern California. It seemed almost Bosnian in the intensity of its bitterness. After a long, screaming session (all of the old enemies and blood feuds were recharged with the energy of 300 red-veined foreheads and 300 pairs of rage-spittling lips), they—we, I should say—decided, in true writer's form, to postpone the decision for a few weeks.

I walked out to my car with another television writer, about twenty years my senior.

"I'm worried about a strike," I said.

"A strike is what we need around here," he muttered bitterly.

"But I'll be broke in a month. I need to work," I said.

"You'll be better off in the long run," the older writer replied, patting me reassuringly on the shoulder. "Did I ever tell you about how we won the thirty days in Betty Ford? We did it by walking out! By sticking together!"

"But don't you think the studios have a point?" I asked. "After all, they take all the risk. Why not increase the initial minimum payment in exchange for a share of hypothetical profits down the line?"

"To hell with them!" he shouted. "F*** management! F*** the power structure! F*** those f*****g f****rs!"

And with that, he sped off in his BMW 750il.

The Betty Ford Center treats many addictions, though not, sadly, the addictions to inappropriate rage, self-dramatization, and luxury automobiles. It leaves these uncured, giving the Hollywood writer a reason to strike. **NR**

■ **THE PRESIDENCY** ■

Sweet Dreams, W.

A little presidential pillow talk

STEVE CHAPMAN

We don't know how posterity will remember President George W. Bush, but we do know he already has an eye on history. Shortly before taking office, he told a reporter that he hoped to make his mark on his very first day in the White House. "I'm trying to set the record," he confided, "as the president who got to bed earliest on Inauguration Day." Bush is a man of his word: After making the rounds of parties, he was back at the official residence at 11:40, more than an hour ahead of the written schedule.

This is what it's going to be like having a grownup in the White House. Bush, you see, shares something basic with millions of people of his generation, not to mention their parents: He cherishes a good night's sleep. He was once a hard-drinking party animal, but upon reaching middle age he discovered the attractions of an early bedtime. Bush now makes a strict routine of retiring by 9:30 and not rising before 6; he sometimes supplements his generous nightly ration with an afternoon nap. During the campaign, he braved ridicule from Maureen Dowd for taking his pillow on his travels to assure pleasant dreams. Country singer Larry Gatlin has told of going to the Governor's Mansion in Austin for dinner: "And at 8:30, 9 P.M., [Bush] said, 'It's time for y'all to go home. It's time for me to get in my pajamas.'"

His insatiable desire for slumber makes a stark contrast with Bill Clinton, whose strongest urges were of a different nature. Clinton was forever sitting up into the wee hours in long conversations with friends, advisers, White House guests, and anyone else unlucky enough to be available. He had a small child's attitude toward bedtime, treating it as a bitter punishment to be delayed as long as possible, heedless of the price to be paid on the morrow. (He kept that approach to the end: During his successor's inaugural address, weary from from a long night of pardoning well-connected Democratic felons, Clinton actually dozed off.) Aides told of getting calls from him in the middle of the night to get answers to any question that might occur to an insomniac president. Clinton was not the sort to be hindered by the thought—though in all fairness, he probably never had it—that those around him might prefer to be sleeping at that time rather than listening to him ruminate on how to improve the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Clinton's urge for ceaseless activity was contagious. Al Gore, who flaunted his disdain for rest along with his pecs, thought nothing of phoning William Daley at a very late hour to ask him to be his campaign manager. When a groggy Daley tried to escape by suggesting that they discuss the matter the next day over coffee, the indefatigable vice president replied that he would wait on the line while Daley made a pot, right then. To dramatize how hard he would work as president, Gore concluded his campaign with a nonstop, 30-hour spree—all the while insisting he was not tired and accusing his opponent of laziness. Appearing at a dawn rally in Tampa, he said, "Well it's almost 5:30 A.M., Texas time. And George Bush is still asleep, and I'm still speaking to people here in Florida." In the end, some voters may have been scared away by the possibility that if Gore were elected, he would insist on staying awake for four years.

Throughout the contest Bush affected a manly indifference to the vice president's display of stamina. W. might fudge on vouchers or a patient's bill of rights, but he would brook no compromise on bedtime. So insistent was he on not wearing himself out that *The New Republic* actually devoted an article to wondering if he was physically up to the job he sought.

The new president may not be philo-

Mr. Chapman is a columnist for the *Chicago Tribune*.

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sophically inclined, but conservatives can take his devotion to sleep as a good omen. Respecting his body's own basic requirements suggests an appreciation of human limits that is the beginning of wisdom about governance. Besides, a president who is abed is a president who is probably dreaming of something other than new regulations, new laws, new taxes, and new "peacekeeping" operations. Bush can find inspiration in the example of Calvin Coolidge, who presided over good times while sacking out for eleven hours a day. Or William Howard Taft, who saved the GOP from the hyperactive Theodore Roosevelt, and whose talent for dozing off any time, anywhere, led his wife to call him "Sleeping Beauty."

When candidate Ronald Reagan was told that in the White House his national security adviser would arrive to brief him every morning at 7:30, Reagan cheerfully replied, "Well, he's going to have a hell of a long wait." All Reagan accomplished on his undemanding schedule was to restore economic vitality and bring down the Soviet empire. Lyndon Johnson, by contrast, napped in the afternoon only so that he could work late into the night overextending the U.S. government both at home and abroad.

A lust for sleep can come in handy to keep a man out of trouble with fetching White House interns. Marilyn Quayle once dismissed the idea that her husband might ever stray because, she said, Dan would always choose golf over sex. Laura Bush exhibits a similar tranquility, perhaps because she knows very well how her husband defines true bliss. Bush's attitude is also bound to pay political dividends by endearing him to millions of Americans whose idea of a rollicking Saturday night is eating takeout pizza, renting a movie, and sawing some logs on the couch. In the White House living quarters, this is an administration that acts like America.

America will probably be grateful. Among liberals who lament the long hours worked by Americans in the 1990s, no one ever thought to blame Clinton and Gore for setting terrible examples. But maybe Bush will induce people to throttle back. Any worker accused of sloth by his boss can plausibly retort, "I'll have you know, I work harder than the president of the United States." After the exhausting scandals and spectacles of the last eight years, a long respite from the peripatetic presidency may be just what we all need. And it will be a relief not to have to wonder where our president is at 10 P.M.

Bush's favorite position, by Roman Genn

Clinton's nocturnal habits mirrored his governing style: lots of distracting and exhausting activity aimed more at empty diversion than real achievement, carrying costs to be recognized only later. Bush's approach, however, may give conservatives a new slogan: That government is best which slumbers most. **NR**

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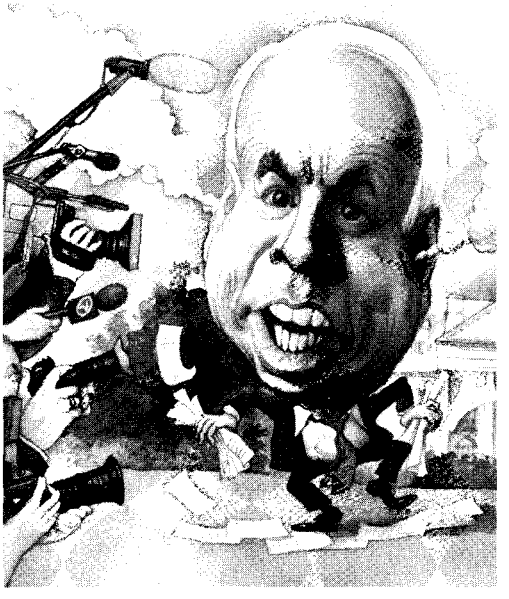
■ COVER STORY ■

A Spoiler's Crusade

Senator John McCain and "the system"

RICHARD LOWRY

At the weekly strategy lunch Senate Republicans hold in the Mansfield Room of the Capitol, John McCain always sits at a table with the same two senators, Chuck Hagel and Fred Thompson. Hagel and Thompson are among the proud, the few, who haven't been turned off by McCain's self-righteousness, or temper, or stubbornness, or some combination of all three—the traits that have made him, at least in the Senate chamber, perhaps the least popular "most popular politician in America" ever. McCain often sits with his back to the rest of his colleagues. "He's bigger than the GOP," says one Republican senator sarcastically, "bigger than Bush."



And getting bigger. Before George W. Bush had even given his victory speech following the Florida imbroglio, McCain was on CNN making one of his there-will-be-blood-on-the-floor pledges to push campaign-finance reform. Before Bush had even introduced his initial education-reform package, McCain was badgering majority leader Trent Lott to give him 21 legislative days immediately, to debate campaign finance. McCain settled for two weeks, but he insisted that they come in March, not after Easter, as Lott suggested in order to give the Senate enough time to consider Bush's education package and budget.

John McCain, who at his best on the campaign trail last year held town-hall meetings that were mini patriotic revivals, is becoming as small as his cause. This contemporary Teddy Roosevelt (as his boosters would have it) is disrupting the passage of a substantive reform agenda—education, tax cuts, social services—in a rush, among other things, to refine the definition of what constitutes "coordination" between candidates and political groups.

Campaign-finance reform is for politicians what the milk compact is for dairy farmers. It is an adjustment to a set of arcane rules that never should have been written in the first place and that no one outside of the directly affected interests feels compelled to pay attention to, let alone understand. As an intellectual matter, it is a travesty, a bad answer to the wrong question; as a political matter, it is a dud, a nonissue hyped into seeming salience by the press; and even as a matter of McCain's own stated goals, it is a contradiction, a check on exactly the active citizenship he seeks to promote.

The McCain-Feingold bill has a pedigree. It was first introduced in 1995, as a reprise of the Boren-Mitchell bill that those two Democratic senators had perennially introduced prior to retiring in 1994. The crown jewel of the bill was a limit on spending by congressional candidates—deemed the *only* way to squeeze special interests out of politics. This provision had the disadvantage of probably being unconstitutional, as the Supreme Court had ruled that candidate spending is an essential free-speech right. So, McCain-Feingold evolved until it assumed its current form, with limits not on candidates, but on party "soft money" fundraising and on expenditures by outside groups—deemed, again, the *only* way to squeeze special interests out of politics.

In light of its history, the bill can be seen as an attempt to limit and regulate *something* in the hopes of reforming—candidates? parties? what?—*something else*. In fact, the same reformers who formerly wanted to enmesh candidates in constraining regulations now sell their plan as a way to protect and empower individual candidates. "Growing numbers of members running for reelection feel they're losing control of their campaigns," McCain chief of staff Mark Salter has explained.

The foremost target of the current McCain-Feingold bill is the parties. They raise "unregulated" soft money, dollars that can't be spent directly on the promotion of federal candidates, but can be spent on "issue advocacy"—ads that don't *expressly* urge the election of a federal candidate—and various party-building activities, from voter registration to supporting state and local candidates. Soft money is considered problematic both because it supposedly is unregulated—in truth, various FEC rulings affect it—and because it involves fantastic sums.

Soft money is an artifact of the Supreme Court's landmark

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Buckley v. *Valeo* decision (1976), which tossed out most of the post-Watergate election reforms. The Court made a distinction between contributions and expenditures. Limiting how much a candidate could spend would effectively limit the amount of his speech, thus constituting an impermissible infringement on his First Amendment rights. Direct contributions to a candidate, on the other hand, if too large, might create an appearance of corruption, a fact that has to be balanced against the free-speech rights of the contributor. This jurisprudence created the current two-tiered system, by upholding a stringent $1,000 limit on direct contributions to candidates ("hard money") and allowing a free-for-all with everything else (soft money).

Reformers argue that the huge soft-money contributions create exactly the kind of appearance that worried the Court about direct contributions. The problem with this is that, since soft money goes to the parties and not to individual candidates, no one can answer the question of who exactly (Jim Nicholson?) is being corrupted. This is why McCain has to argue that "the system" is rotten in a general, unspecified, yet-to-be-spelled-out way, and that "everyone" is corrupt, all the way from the starched-up Orrin Hatch to the mobbed-up Jim Traficant. But saying everyone is corrupt is really a way of saying no one in particular is corrupt. McCain's nemesis, Sen. Mitch McConnell, illustrated this point when he suggested that all senators—not just members of the Ethics Committee—report any evidence of corruption as soon as they find it. McCain has yet to come forward.

An ordinary politician might suppose that certain behavior isn't so nefarious if he is engaging in it himself. McCain apparently isn't so small-minded. He now has his own "leadership PAC," after trying to ban PACs. In Michigan during the primaries, he launched just the sort of "anonymous communication"—his "Catholic Voter Alert" calls against Bush—that he had railed against, and would bewail again when he was at the receiving end of "Republicans for Clean Air" ads in New York. His latest bill would ban politicians from writing letters to raise soft money for outside advocacy groups. But since 1999, Citizens Against Government Waste has been using a McCain fundraising letter, which coolly warns that pork-barrel spending *could cost your children their lives!*

In the end, the case against soft money boils down to the old saw that there is "just too much money in the system." Which means effectively that too much money is being spent on advertising, on voter registration, on get-out-the-vote efforts—an odd complaint for an advocate, like McCain, of increased political involvement. *Politics is really important, just don't spend anything on it!* Some McCainiacs have opened up another line of attack: that soft money favors the Democrats. (For his part, McCain maintains that enacting campaign-finance reform is the only way W. can hope to pass the rest of his agenda, which, of course, is why the helpful senator is in such a hurry to get to it.)

The parties have indeed achieved a rough parity in soft money, but this funding is still more important to the GOP. It's a way of getting the party's message out despite the media environment, which broadly favors the Democrats. And it's a way of counteracting the muscle of the unions. A soft-money ban would wipe corporations from the playing field, but unions could still leverage their manpower and other resources for the Democrats. And raising the limit on hard money—where the GOP has an advantage—probably wouldn't make up the loss in soft money, since most hard-money contributions are tiny.

Even if there were a total soft-money ban, big money would still figure in politics. Parallel organizations would spring up to do the traditional work of the parties. This is why reformers can't "just" ban soft money, but must chase after all possible outlets for political money in an effort to seal the system. As the net of regulations gets wider and wider, the First Amendment problems become starker and starker. Thus the constitutional vulnerability of McCain's efforts to hamper the activities (especially the "issue advocacy" advertising) of citizen groups. Those efforts have also created his worst headache politically, as conservative-grassroots groups scream their opposition.

This is perhaps why, in late 1999, before the primary campaign, McCain dropped such provisions from his bill. He was happy to take credit for this in a letter to state right-to-life groups last January: "During previous campaign finance reform debates, the National Right to Life Washington office was severely critical of proposed restrictions on issue advocacy ads. *In order to address this concern, the legislation I brought to the floor this year had no such restrictions on issue advocacy advertisements*" (emphasis in original). McCain has evidently stopped addressing this concern, since all the restrictions are right back in his bill.

A CONSTITUTION, A 'MANDATE'

McCain-Feingold would make it illegal for corporations—a category that includes most advocacy groups—and unions to engage in "electioneering communications" (ads that mention a candidate's name) within 60 days of an election. This is how incumbents, in the words of McCain's Mark Salter, hope to regain "control" of their campaigns. Also, since spending that outside groups coordinate with a candidate is subject to strict hard-money treatment, McCain-Feingold changes the rules to make it almost impossible for such groups to avoid such coordination. For instance, simply sharing professional services—"polling, media advice, fundraising," etc., etc.—would constitute coordination.

The soft-money portions of McCain-Feingold will certainly invite constitutional challenge, since they involve a whole new swath of election regulation. But the provisions affecting independent groups drive straight into the teeth of *Buckley*. "As long as persons and groups eschew expenditures that in express terms advocate the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate, they are free to spend as much as they want to promote the candidate and his views," the Court wrote in that case. Why McCain feels compelled to do this—distracting from his soft-money ban, which is the easiest sell politically—is unclear: Does he secretly crave a veto, so the "crusade," as he calls it, can go on and on? Does he want to stick it to the "shadowy" groups that ran ads against him in the primaries?

Of course, McCain has said he has a "mandate" to push campaign-finance reform to the hilt. (His aides now say he

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regrets that formulation.) This is an idea that relies on the pervasive misunderstanding that McCain's success in the Republican primaries somehow stemmed from, say, the "electioneering communications" provisions in McCain-Feingold. A nice expression of this mistake was a *New York Times* op-ed piece by William Kristol and Jeffrey Bell after Rick Lazio and Hillary Clinton inked their voluntary soft-money ban last year. They argued that conservatives would have to reconcile their disdain for campaign-finance reform with their desire to beat Hillary, since Lazio had latched on to the soft-money issue that had carried McCain to such heights.

This analysis seemed amusingly implausible at the time, but proved flatly ridiculous in light of Hillary's 12-point stomping of Lazio. The Lazio soft-money McCain-style juggernaut failed to materialize, for a couple of reasons: 1) Lazio is not a war hero with an electrifying stage presence; 2) the huddled masses of New York care less about the intricacies of election law (Lazio's message) than they do about more mundane things, like, oh, jobs upstate (Hillary's message). As pollster Andrew Kohut pointed out, even among McCain's own supporters in the Republican primaries, only a small minority cited campaign-finance reform as their foremost concern (including in New Hampshire and Michigan).

Perhaps what drives McCain is the same thing that prompts him to turn his back on his colleagues at lunch. He's just not a party guy.

No, McCain's crusade is an idiosyncratic, not a popular one. Perhaps what drives him is the same thing that prompts him to turn his back on his colleagues at lunch. McCain is just not a party guy. Political parties are great American institutions, perhaps the most vibrant associations in the country, admirably committed, more or less, to certain principles. But they are constant checks on moral vanity, requiring their supporters to make grubby compromises and stand united with crude colleagues, in the expectation that eventually some good will come of it. But McCain, who prizes his purity above all, will have none of it, and seems to resent even the expectation that he be a team player.

So, his bill attacks the political parties, he pushes it in defiance of the wishes of a newly inaugurated president of his own party, he holds town-hall meetings in states of vulnerable Republican senators to embarrass them for opposing his bill, even as partisan control of the Senate hangs in the balance. As his Republican colleagues struggle to deliver on Bush's promises, McCain focuses on his own. He may well succeed in passing a campaign-finance bill this year. To what end is unclear, since it will quickly land in the courts, and no restrictions will be extensive enough actually to vanquish, or even much dent, "big money." For his trouble, he probably gets a press release ("McCain Reforms Washington!") and perhaps a new Supreme Court decision bearing his name.

McCain, the hero, the patriot, should be bigger than this. He's not. **NR**

The Rev. Untouchable

The continuing, sorry saga of Jesse Jackson

DAVE SHIFLETT

JESSE JACKSON must be feeling fabulous these days. The nation's most recognizable cleric/politician has been caught knocking up an aide; has been caught lying about it; and is suspected of supporting his auxiliary family with crates of cash taken from organizational accounts. He has topped the gaudy display with an act of contritional blitzkrieg best measured by stopwatch and laughmeter.

It is true that any high-profile philanderer would be justified in feeling some degree of comfort in these circumstances. Having been found out, he must no longer bear the fear of discovery, which in Jackson's case may have been profound, as it is reported that this man of the cloth has long been a man of the sheets, too. Coming clean brings peace of mind, and peace of mind is one of the Good Lord's greater gifts.

Yet Jackson's sense of euphoria—for euphoria it must be—is born of a different source, a source his religion tells him to be very wary of. We speak, of course, of pride. Jackson now knows he can survive transgressions that would earn an ordinary preacher or politician a one-way ticket to oblivion. The big story from—let's call it Loingate—is that it reveals Jackson as an Untouchable. He did not dodge a bullet. Instead, the bullet struck him full in the chest—and bounced off.

And so the reverend has every reason to feel like Superman. He has broken a major commandment, but many in his flock don't seem to care. Even his wife of long standing, publicly at least, has made peace with the situation and will perhaps enlist herself as a baby-sitter. He has also dangled a significant hunk of investigatory bait in front of the media and Congress, in the form of questions regarding the possible expenditure of hundreds of thousands of donated dollars to relocate and sustain this side project. Yet neither the media nor Congress appears to be rising to the bait.

He has also suggested that anyone who pursues him has an agenda of racial nastiness. And so, even as a man caught fully with his pants down continues firing moral salvos at his critics, there is a distinct hesitancy to ring the hypocrisy bell, a bell that has tolled doom for lesser mortals, including a couple of recent Speakers of the U.S. House of Representatives during the Clinton scandals.

Jesse Jackson now carries one of the most impressive résumés in public life. He is a counselor to presidents, a Wall Street rainmaker, a Democratic-party titan, an activist whose

Mr. Shiflett is a writer living in Midlothian, Virginia.

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followers will take to the streets at his command, and a man who plays both roles in the media—a person who is covered (though in highly reverent fashion), and who covers others on his very own CNN talk show. Add to that this latest accomplishment: He walks upon the waters. At this writing, he has come out of the scandal stronger than he entered it. All of which is good news for Jesse, but bad news for most everyone else, including his political allies.

DAVID DUKE WOULDN'T DARE

The first consideration, of course, should be the effect Loingate has on the nation's political and social health.

Black Americans and those who support their advancement—most Americans, by my count—have an interest in removing as many obstacles to fairness and acceptance as possible, including the longstanding practice of racial stereotyping, by which individual transgressions are transformed into general racial attributes. When David Duke, for example, mounts a soapbox to wag his malevolent tongue, it is an obligation of citizenship to rain fire, brimstone, and withering invective upon him.

Unfortunately, had Jackson followed a script written by David Duke, he could not have supplied more smear material. In fact, Duke—as crude a race-baiter as he is—might not have dared go this far.

Consider the tale to date: Here is a black preacher/politician—the most highly visible and powerful black leader in America—pouncing on an employee and doing his part to inflate the already alarmingly high illegitimacy rate. That he is also the nation's premier public moralist, indeed recently denouncing a presidential election as illegitimate, cannot be overlooked. Nor can the fact that he was moral counselor to our president after it was revealed that he was sexually involved, though not to the point of parenthood, with a female staffer.

■

Jackson has come out of the scandal stronger than he entered it. All of which is good news for Jesse, but bad news for most everyone else.

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This is just the beginning. Hearing the dogs baying in the distance, this preacher of the Truth attempts to hide behind the Veil of Lies, denying his fatherhood to irksome inquirers. As Duke might put it, the randy reverend not only lies down with the help, but also lies when he gets back up again. He confesses only when tracked down by the nation's leading supermarket tabloid, which reports that he has not only been rummaging around in his aide's drawers, but perhaps his organization's cash drawer as well.

Duke would probably have stopped at this point. What more could a racist scriptwriter desire? The premier moral

... in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

—BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, 1789

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and political force is unmasked as a philanderer, hypocrite, liar, and very possibly a crook. Yet there is more to come.

Jackson announces his withdrawal from public life for the purposes of soul-searching and family healing. By normal standards, a long walk in the wilderness would be required. Trust has been broken not only between the reverend and his family, but on a national level. All the kids who have attempted, under often trying conditions, to heed his call to walk upright—they too have been betrayed. Meanwhile, those who have contributed to his organization have every reason to suspect that their money has been used not for the advancement of the virtuous and clean, but for the advancement of the reverend's genes. There is much to atone for.

Duke's script might dare keep Jackson out of sight for a month, which would be comic enough. There is, after all, some precedent to consider, such as the Jimmy Swaggart case. This incident, to be sure, was somewhat different. Swaggart actually pastored a church, which Jackson does not. Jackson pastors a national congregation, and so bears a much higher level of responsibility. Swaggart, of course, was shamed from the pulpit and has spent the succeeding years on the spit, roasted at every remembrance and dead to the world as anything save a source of ridicule. For that matter, Newt Gingrich lost nearly all support when his philandering became an item. Having Jackson return to the spotlight after a mere month would make Duke's point about the relative importance morality has in Jackson's community.

That Jackson's stroll in the desert lasted less than three days—Duke wouldn't have dared it. Jackson's resurrection was faster than his Lord's. Now that's chutzpah, among other things.

The Jackson scandal does not take on a truly ominous character, however, until Jackson leaves the wilderness and returns to church, where he was greeted by a full chorus of Amen Charlies, including Charlie Rangel, New York state comptroller Carl McCall, city comptroller Alan Hevesi, and other Democratic elders. The message: We don't care what you've done. Your place in the party is secure. From church he went directly to Wall Street, where he was also greeted as a hero. Similarly, CNN—which should be investigating Jackson—said he could have his show back any time he wants.

The moral Duke would like us all to take from this is clear enough. It is not only that blacks are held to a different standard than whites. It is that they cannot, for reasons peculiar to race, be rightly held to such standards. Therefore, the most prominent black moralist and political leader can be a philanderer, liar, hypocrite, and perhaps a crook. Unfortunately, unless Jackson is rejected by his peers, the Duke moral stands in danger of becoming the default moral.

Jesse Jackson by Roman Genn

HIS PEERS MUST STOP HIM

Jackson's political enemies, of course, cannot drop the dirty dime on the reverend. They can complain there is a double standard at work. What, they ask, would be the likely result were a right-wing preacher/pol like Pat Robertson caught in a similar scandal? Again, the parallels aren't precise. Were Robertson to enjoy a relationship with George W. Bush that rivaled that which Jackson enjoyed with Bill Clinton and continues to enjoy with the Democratic party, that would be seen as scandal enough.

There is no doubt, however, that were Robertson caught screwing the help and suspected of funding the operation out of organizational funds, he'd not only be canned by his followers (and perhaps caned as well), there would be calls from within Congress, with the support of many Republicans, to investigate a possible misuse of funds. The media scrutiny would be severe, and rightly so. There would be great delight in his undoing, and it would be permanent.

Now, Republicans will probably gain politically if Jackson remains untouched. Loingate helps them make their case that the Democratic party is the party of deep moral sleaze. The Democrats are already on record for their united defense of Clinton's legal and sexual transgressions. If Jackson retains his prominence, the party will also be on record as giving protected status to clerics who mess with staff, lie about the relationship, and may have paid the bills from the till. This may even shock the soccer moms into rethinking their allegiance to the party of government.

Jackson's walk upon the waters can be stopped only by his political and religious peers. Their job is to make it clear that Jackson has been measured against reasonable standards of behavior, and as a result has lost his moral and political standing. Prominent black clergymen like Calvin Butts, Floyd Flake, A. R. Bernard, Gary Simpson, and Franklin Richardson have a prominent role to play, as do black intellectuals and journalists. Jackson once walked with the angels. It is time for anvils to be tied to his ankles, and let nature take its course. It is time for Jesse to flounder with the carp.

One hopes this is accomplished soon. Recently, Jackson hired Mel Reynolds for a position at his Operation PUSH (a name that now takes on an amusing character). Reynolds, of course, was also caught drilling a staffer some time back—and an underage one at that. He was subsequently jailed on a kiddie-porn charge.

Again, Duke just wouldn't dare. **NR**

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Days of Reckonings

A smart man, a foolish column

RAMESH PONNURU

PAUL KRUGMAN is probably the smartest man ever to have a regular column on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*. A professor of economics who has taught at Yale, Stanford, MIT, and now Princeton, Krugman is widely expected to win a Nobel prize some day. It's a rational expectation: Though not yet 50, Krugman has made major, even revolutionary, contributions to international-trade theory and to economic geography. So why is his column so extraordinarily awful?

It isn't that he's a liberal. He is one, but that does not distinguish him at the *Times*, which employs no conservative columnist (William Safire, who imagines himself to be a libertarian, is too ideologically confused to count). Besides, Krugman has been tough on his fellow liberals in the past. Early in the Clinton administration, for example, he was a vocal critic of the then-fashionable notion that countries compete with one another the way companies do. His criticism helped to demolish the intellectual pretensions of advocates of protectionism and of federal aid for "cutting edge" industries, both of which were said to be necessary to improve American "competitiveness."

Krugman's role in that debate was especially laudable, for two reasons: first, because the protectionists had claimed to be inspired by some of Krugman's own work on trade; and second, because the controversy may well have cost him a job in the Clinton administration. In a 1995 essay, Krugman wrote, "I was more or less disgraced, and my public profile was and still is much lower than at its peak." But the episode also convinced him, as he explained in his book *Pop Internationalism*, that it was important to combat economic nonsense in the public press. For a while, he wrote regularly for *Slate*. His column at the *Times*, "Reckonings," started at the beginning of 2000.

He has continued to argue for free trade, and has won some enemies on that account. Ralph Nader wrote a characteristically humorless "parody" in which the *Times* sacked Krugman and his colleague Thomas Friedman and replaced them with low-wage Chinese columnists. In *The American Prospect*, a liberal magazine, Robert Kuttner wrote an attack on Krugman as "the conservative's ideal liberal." While sour, the essay scored some real points. Krugman had, for instance, assailed the "competitiveness" crowd for being "policy entrepreneurs"—popularizers rather than scholars—but never supplied a definition of the put-down that would not also cover his own op-eds.

Robert Kuttner also made a valid point in calling attention to the columnist's "smugness." To hear Paul Krugman tell it, people who disagree with him are "cranks" who have never read an economic textbook and can't do math. Of course, these characterizations are often true. But Krugman is disconcertingly prone to asserting—and *merely* asserting—which people "deserve to be taken seriously" and which don't. Or he will write that some line of argument "leads us into the whole question of whether . . . the [federal] budget is loaded with fat (it isn't)." Well, that settles that.

This fondness for the *ipse dixit* may be related to Krugman's grandiose view of his discipline. In the 1995 essay mentioned above, he wrote that as a boy he had been a fan of Isaac Asimov's Foundation series, which was based on the premise that a sufficiently sophisticated science—Asimov dubbed it "psychohistory"—could predict the course of empires half a millennium into the future. "Someday there will exist a unified social science of the kind that Asimov imagined," Krugman wrote, "but for the time being economics is as close to psychohistory as you can get."

This description-cum-aspiration is, as the liberal economist James K. Galbraith has observed, not so much scientific as scientistic. Rather than confront that critique, Krugman caricatures it. He pretends that anyone who disagrees with his epistemology wants economics to have "a literary core," without any graphs or equations. It would be more accurate to say that his critics recognize that the graphs and equations are themselves a specialized form of rhetoric and should be evaluated in that light.

The caricature of opposing views is, indeed, the chief way Krugman denies the existence of serious debates. He often uses this tactic against conservatives. In *Slate*, for example, he once claimed that "the supply-side idea," which he compared to a "virus," "is that tax cuts have such a positive effect on the economy that one need not worry about paying for them with spending cuts." Very few supply-siders have ever made such a claim, and the Reagan administration's budgets certainly never counted on any such effect. What supply-siders generally argue is that because they generate economic activity, some kinds of tax cuts reduce government revenues by much less than one would otherwise estimate.

Krugman can be interesting when he is not writing polemics against imaginary adversaries. In his first months at the *Times*, this was frequently the case. He criticized the campaign to break up Microsoft on the grounds that standard neoclassical analysis, which counsels against a breakup in such a case, should trump any speculation about the effect of a breakup on technological innovation. He suggested that Alan Greenspan is not an infallible source of wisdom on public policy, and should be careful not to imply that he is. He pointed out that the fuss over bioengineered foods was out of all proportion to the health risks they pose, which are far lower than those associated with diet supplements.

But then came the presidential election. As it drew nearer, Krugman's column became a drearily predictable attack on George W. Bush. Krugman was obsessed with Bush's proposals to cut taxes and allow workers to invest Social Security funds. During the last three months of the campaign, Krugman devoted 14 columns to one or both topics—and took swipes at Bush's plans in other columns. And this was

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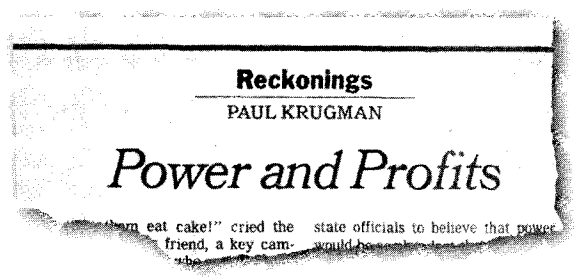
after a stream of Social Security columns in May, one of which began, "Oh no, not another column on Social Security!" (This was one of the rare occasions on which Krugman wrote with a real feel for his audience.)

The arguments were as repetitive as the topics. Every Social Security column Krugman wrote in the fall made the same point: that the money Bush would let young workers invest for their retirements was already pledged to the retirements of middle-aged workers, and that Bush was being deceptive about how he would keep both pledges. Krugman wrote that "conservatives . . . not so secretly believe that [Bush's] real program will involve drastic cuts in social spending" and "large cuts in Social Security benefits" to pay for his tax cuts and Social Security reform. He listed no conservatives who believed these things, secretly or otherwise. "What is certain is that Mr. Bush's actual Social Security proposal would bankrupt the system. That's not a fuzzy number—it's a cold, hard fact."

No, it isn't. Bush's plan doesn't increase Social Security's liabilities by a dollar. The program, with or without the plan, is supposed to help both the middle-aged and the young when they retire. Bush's plan brings forward the time at which some of the money for these expenses has to be raised, which is admittedly not a small matter; but the money has to be found whether or not Bush's plan is adopted. Krugman gave Gore "some points for honesty" because he said he would get the money from general revenue, but that's fatuous: Gore never said how he would raise that revenue. (Drastic cuts in social spending?)


Reckonings
PAUL KRUGMAN
Power and Profits
them eat cake!" cried the friend, a key cam- state officials to believe that power

Krugman had a secondary line of attack: Bush would "encourage workers to buy stocks at exactly the wrong time," since the market was near a peak. But Bush has talked about letting workers invest 2 percent of every paycheck over the course of their working lives. The state of the NASDAQ when they make their first purchase won't settle their fates.

It's easy to see why Bush's proposal on Social Security would generate such fierce opposition. Why Krugman is so worked up about his tax cuts—smaller as a percentage of the economy than either Ronald Reagan's or John F. Kennedy's, and about 5 percent of projected federal revenues—is harder to fathom. But worked up he is; worked up enough to cut some corners.

Thus, Krugman labeled Citizens for Tax Justice a "watchdog group" when he cited it to show how Bush's tax cuts are skewed to the wealthy; never mind the group's leftism, let alone its creative accounting. Krugman wrote that Bush "made a gratuitous further tilt to the rich by slashing marginal rates mainly at the top, while leaving the marginal rate on most middle-income taxpayers unchanged." This statement is simply false: Bush's tax plan cuts tax rates across the board. Around Labor Day, Krugman wrote that since most Americans pay less in income tax than in other federal taxes, the other taxes should be cut first. Two months later, he turned around and described Bush's Social Security plan as a reduction in the payroll tax—the foremost of those other taxes—and condemned him for it.

A month before the election, Krugman seemed to recognize how tedious he was getting. He wrote, "I really, truly wasn't planning to write any more columns about George W. Bush's arithmetic." But he was moved to write yet another column on it, he explained, by Bush's sheer mendacity. Bush had gone on *Moneyline*, a CNN show, and said that his $1.3 trillion tax cut was a "quarter" of the $4.6 trillion surplus expected over the next ten years. (Expected, that is, at the time of the broadcast; the estimate has since risen.) Krugman was furious, because 1.3 trillion isn't 25 percent of 4.6 trillion. Umm, okay, Professor: It's 28.3 percent. Is class dismissed?

Apparently not. Krugman has continued in this vein since the election. In a recent column, he lectured Dick Cheney about, yes, tax cuts. On occasion, he conceded, fiscal policy could help fight recessions. "But otherwise we should make budgets for the long-run, and let the Fed deal with short-run problems by adjusting interest rates." He concluded, with impressive pomposity, that "it's disturbing that Mr. Cheney seems unaware of this basic policy rule." There is no such "basic policy rule," no such well-established doctrine. It is merely a view, one with some plausible arguments in its favor and some better arguments against it. To disagree with it is not to demonstrate ignorance.

It was in a December column, however, that the latent thuggishness of Krugman's intellectual stance was most clearly expressed. He warned Bush not to hire anyone who worked for the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, or the American Enterprise Institute: "The glory years of the think tanks were the 1970's, when they provided an alternative to what was perceived—with some justice—as the liberal bias of academia. The think tanks were places where neoconservative intellectuals could think the unthinkable and say the unsayable. . . . But that was a long time ago." Nowadays, evidently, academia is a place of air and light. To deny liberal bias from a perch at the editorial page of the *New York Times* is an act of considerable chutzpah.

One wonders what the rationale was for giving Krugman a column there in the first place. If there is a market for neoliberal condescension, it was already being well served by Thomas Friedman. And there is the matter of what one might charitably call Krugman's prose style. Krugman columns end with lines like "Stay tuned." Or—a week later!—"We'll soon find out." Speaking of charity, does the *Times* still have editors? "And when the chickens that didn't hatch come home to roost, we will rue the days when, misled by sloppy accounting and rosy scenarios, we gave away the national nest egg."

In *Pop Internationalism*, Krugman declared that it was his ambition "to write essays for non-economists that were clear, effective, and even entertaining," and that contained "no intellectual cheap shots." Nobel or no, it appears increasingly unlikely that he will ever achieve that goal. **NR**

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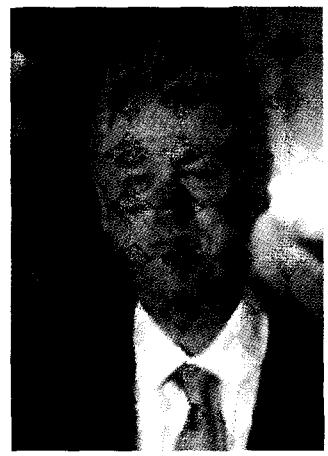
Thank you President Clinton for finally speaking out for drug policy reform!



In an interview published on December 25, 2000[1] President Clinton expressed the need for dramatic reform in drug policy.

Here are President Clinton's views:

"We really need a re-examination of our entire policy on imprisonment."

" . . . small amounts of marijuana have been decriminalized in some places, and should be."

"...a lot of people are in prison today because they have drug problems or alcohol problems. And too many of them are getting out-particularly out of state systems-without treatment, without education, without skill, without serious efforts at job placement.

"I think the sentences in many cases are too long for nonviolent offenders, and the facilities are not structured to maximize success when people get out ... I think this whole thing needs to be re-examined."

"I certainly think [mandatory sentences] need to be re-examined. And the disparities are unconscionable between crack and powdered cocaine. I tried to change that. The Republican Congress was willing to narrow but not eliminate them, the theory being that people who use crack were more violent that people who used cocaine. What they really meant was: People who used crack were more likely to be poor-and, coincidentally black or brown. And therefore not have money. Those people that used cocaine were more likely to be rich, pay for it and therefore be peaceful."

"I don't believe, by and large, in permanent lifetime penalties. There is a bill in Congress today that has bipartisan support-that would restore voting rights to former prisoners after their full sentences have been discharged."

Let's pray George W. Bush will face up to this important issue at the beginning of his term in office, not the end.

For information contact **Common Sense for Drug Policy,**
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at info@csdp.org and 703-354-9050

[1] *Interview of President Clinton by Jan Wenner, Rolling Stone, December 28, 2000. http://www.rollingstone.com*

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In Defense of Racial Profiling

Where is our common sense?

JOHN DERBYSHIRE

"RACIAL PROFILING" has become one of the shibboleths of our time. Anyone who wants a public career in the United States must place himself on record as being against it. Thus, ex-senator John Ashcroft, on the eve of his confirmation hearings: "It's wrong, inappropriate, shouldn't be done." During the vice-presidential debate last October, moderator Bernard Shaw invited the candidates to imagine themselves black victims of racial profiling. Both made the required ritual protestations of outrage. Lieberman: "I have a few African-American friends who have gone through this horror, and you know, it makes me want to kind of hit the wall, because it is such an assault on their humanity and their citizenship." Cheney: "It's the sense of anger and frustration and rage that would go with knowing that the only reason you were stopped . . . was because of the color of your skin . . ." In the strange, rather depressing, pattern these things always follow nowadays, the American public has speedily swung into line behind the Pied Pipers: Gallup reports that 81 percent of the public disapproves of racial profiling.

All of which represents an extraordinary level of awareness of, and hostility to, and even *passion* against ("hit the wall . . .") a practice that, up to about five years ago, practically nobody had heard of. It is, in fact, instructive to begin by looking at the history of this shibboleth.

To people who follow politics, the term "racial profiling" probably first registered when Al Gore debated Bill Bradley at New York's Apollo Theatre in February 2000. Here is Bradley, speaking of the 1999 shooting of African immigrant Amadou Diallo by New York City police: "I . . . think it reflects . . . racial profiling that seeps into the mind of someone so that he sees a wallet in the hand of a white man as a wallet, but a wallet in the hand of a black man as a gun. And we—we have to change that. I would issue an executive order that would eliminate racial profiling at the federal level."

Nobody was unkind enough to ask Sen. Bradley how an executive order would change what a policeman sees in a dark lobby in a dangerous neighborhood at night. Nor was anyone so tactless as to ask him about the case of LaTanya Haggerty, shot dead in June 1999 by a Chicago policewoman who mistook her cell phone for a handgun. The policewoman was, like Ms. Haggerty, black.

Al Gore, in that debate at the Apollo, did successfully, and famously, ambush Bradley by remarking that: "You know, racial profiling practically began in New Jersey, Senator Bradley." In true Clinton-Gore fashion, this is not true, but it is *sort of* true. "Racial profiling" the *thing* has been around for as long as police work, and is practiced everywhere. "Racial profiling" the *term* did indeed have its origins on the New Jersey Turnpike in the early 1990s. The reason for the prominence of this rather unappealing stretch of expressway in the history of the phenomenon is simple: The turnpike is the main conduit for the shipment of illegal drugs and other contraband to the great criminal marts of the Northeast.

The career of the term "racial profiling" seems to have begun in 1994, but did not really take off until April 1998, when two white New Jersey state troopers pulled over a van for speeding. As they approached the van from behind, it suddenly reversed towards them. The troopers fired eleven shots from their handguns, wounding three of the van's four occupants, who were all black or Hispanic. The troopers, James Kenna and John Hogan, subsequently became poster boys for the "racial profiling" lobbies, facing the same indignities, though so far with less serious consequences, as were endured by the Los Angeles policemen in the Rodney King case: endless investigations, double jeopardy, and so on.

And a shibboleth was born. News-media databases list only a scattering of instances of the term "racial profiling" from 1994 to 1998. In that latter year, the number hit double digits, and thereafter rose quickly into the hundreds and thousands. Now we all know about it, and we are, of course, all against it.

Well, not quite all. American courts—including (see below) the U.S. Supreme Court—are not against it. Jurisprudence on the matter is pretty clear: So long as race is only one factor in a generalized approach to the questioning of suspects, it may be considered. And of course, *pace* Candidate Cheney, it always *is* only one factor. I have been unable to locate any statistics on the point, but I feel sure that elderly black women are stopped by the police much less often than are young white men.

Even in the political sphere, where truth-telling and independent thinking on matters of race have long been liabilities, there are those who refuse to mouth the required pieties. Alan Keyes, when asked by Larry King if he would be angry with a police officer who pulled him over for being black, replied: "I was raised that everything I did represented my family, my race, and my country. I would be angry with the people giving me a bad reputation."

GOODBYE TO COMMON SENSE

Practically all law-enforcement professionals believe in the need for racial profiling. In an article on the topic for *The New York Times Magazine* in June 1999, Jeffrey Goldberg interviewed Bernard Parks, chief of the Los Angeles Police Department. Parks, who is black, asked rhetorically of racial profiling: "Should we play the percentages? . . . It's common sense." Note that date, though. This was pretty much the latest time at which it was possible for a public official to speak truthfully about racial profiling. Law-enforcement professionals were learning the importance of keeping their thoughts to themselves. Four months before the Goldberg piece saw print, New Jersey state-police superintendent Carl Williams, in an interview, said that certain crimes were associated with certain ethnic groups, and that it was naïve to think that race was not an issue in policing—both statements,

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of course, perfectly true. Supt. Williams was fired the same day by Gov. Christie Todd Whitman.

Like other race issues in the U.S., racial profiling is a "tadpole," with an enormous black head and a long but comparatively inconsequential brown, yellow, and red tail. While Hispanic, "Asian-American," and other lesser groups have taken up the "racial profiling" chant with gusto, the crux of the matter is the resentment that black Americans feel toward the attentions of white policemen. By far the largest number of Americans angry about racial profiling are law-abiding black people who feel that they are stopped and questioned because the police regard *all* black people with undue suspicion. They feel that they are the victims of a negative stereotype.

They are. Unfortunately, a negative stereotype can be correct, and even useful. I was surprised to find, when researching this article, that within the academic field of social psychology there is a large literature on stereotypes, and that much of it—an entire school of thought—holds that stereotypes are essential life tools. On the scientific evidence, the primary function of stereotypes is what researchers call "the reality function." That is, stereotypes are useful tools for dealing with the world. Confronted with a snake or a fawn, our immediate behavior is determined by generalized beliefs—stereotypes—about snakes and fawns. Stereotypes are, in fact, merely one aspect of the mind's ability to make generalizations, without which science and mathematics, not to mention, as the snake/fawn example shows, much of everyday life, would be impossible.

At some level, everybody knows this stuff, even the guardians of the "racial profiling" flame. Jesse Jackson famously, in 1993, confessed that: "There is nothing more painful to me at this stage in my life than to walk down the street and hear footsteps and start thinking about robbery, then look around and see somebody white and feel relieved." Here is Sandra Seegars of the Washington, D.C., Taxicab Commission:

> Late at night, if I saw young black men dressed in a slovenly way, I wouldn't pick them up . . . And during the day, I'd think twice about it.

Pressed to define "slovenly," Ms. Seegars elaborated thus: "A young black guy with his hat on backwards, shirttail hanging down longer than his coat, baggy pants down below his underwear, and unlaced tennis shoes." Now *there's* a stereotype for you! Ms. Seegars is, of course, black.

Law-enforcement officials are simply employing the same stereotypes as you, me, Jesse, and Sandra, but taking the opposite course of action. What we seek to avoid, they pursue. They do this for reasons of simple efficiency. A policeman who concentrates a disproportionate amount of his limited time and resources on young black men is going to uncover far more crimes—and therefore be far more successful in his career—than one who biases his attention toward, say, middle-aged Asian women. It is, as Chief Parks said, common sense.

Similarly with the tail of the tadpole—racial-profiling issues that do not involve black people. China is known to have obtained a top-secret warhead design. Among those with clearance to work on that design are people from various kinds of national and racial background. Which ones should investigators concentrate on? The Swedes? The answer surely is: They should first check out anyone who has family or friends in China, who has made trips to China, or who has met with Chinese officials. This would include me, for example—my father-in-law is an official of the Chinese Communist Party. Would I then have been "racially profiled"?

It is not very surprising to learn that the main fruit of the "racial profiling" hysteria has been a decline in the efficiency of police work. In Philadelphia, a federal court order now requires police to fill out both sides of an 8½-by-11 sheet on every citizen contact. Law-enforcement agencies nationwide are engaged in similar statistics-gathering exercises, under pressure from federal lawmakers like U.S. Rep. John Conyers, who has announced that he will introduce a bill to force police agencies to keep detailed information about traffic stops. ("The struggle goes on," declared Rep. Conyers. The struggle that is going on, it sometimes seems, is a struggle to prevent our police forces from accomplishing any useful work at all.)

■

A policeman who concentrates a disproportionate amount of his time and resources on young black men is going to uncover far more crimes.

■

The mountain of statistics that is being brought forth by all this panic does not, on the evidence so far, seem likely to shed much light on what is happening. The numbers have a way of leading off into infinite regresses of uncertainty. The city of San Jose, Calif., for example, discovered that, yes, the percentage of blacks being stopped was higher than their representation in the city's population. Ah, but patrol cars were computer-assigned to high-crime districts, which are mainly inhabited by minorities. So that over-representation might actually be an under-representation! But then, minorities have fewer cars . . .

THE CORE ARGUMENTS

Notwithstanding the extreme difficulty of finding out what is actually happening, we can at least seek some moral and philosophical grounds on which to take a stand either for or against racial profiling. I am going to take it as a given that most readers of this article will be of a conservative inclination, and shall offer only those arguments likely to appeal to persons so inclined. If you seek arguments of other kinds, they are not hard to find—just pick up your newspaper or turn on your TV.

Of arguments *against* racial profiling, probably the ones most persuasive to a conservative are the ones from libertarianism. Many of the stop-and-search cases that brought this matter into the headlines were part of the so-called war on drugs. The police procedures behind them were ratified by court decisions of the 1980s, themselves mostly responding to the rising tide of illegal narcotics. In *U.S. vs. Montoya De Hernandez* (1985) for example, Chief Justice Rehnquist validated the detention of a suspected "balloon swallowing" drug courier until the material had passed through her system, by noting previous invasions upheld by the Court:

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> [F]irst class mail may be opened without a warrant on less than probable cause . . . Automotive travellers may be stopped . . . near the border without individualized suspicion *even if the stop is based largely on ethnicity* . . .

(My italics.) The Chief Justice further noted that these incursions are in response to "the veritable national crisis in law enforcement caused by smuggling of illegal narcotics."

Many on the political Right feel that the war on drugs is at best misguided, at worst a moral and constitutional disaster. Yet it is naïve to imagine that the "racial profiling" hubbub would go away, or even much diminish, if all state and federal drug laws were repealed tomorrow. Black and Hispanic Americans would still be committing crimes at rates higher than citizens of other races. The differential criminality of various ethnic groups is not only, or even mainly, located in drug crimes. In 1997, for example, blacks, who are 13 percent of the U.S. population, comprised 35 percent of those arrested for embezzlement. (It is not generally appreciated that black Americans commit higher levels not only of "street crime," but also of white-collar crime.)

■

We must confront our national hysteria about race, which causes large numbers of otherwise sane people to believe foolish things.

■

Even without the drug war, diligent police officers would still, therefore, be correct to regard black and Hispanic citizens—other factors duly considered—as more likely to be breaking the law. The Chinese government would still be trying to recruit spies exclusively from among Chinese-born Americans. (The Chinese Communist Party is, in this respect, the keenest "racial profiler" of all.) The Amadou Diallo case—the police were looking for a rapist—would still have happened.

The best non-libertarian argument against racial profiling is the one from equality before the law. This has been most cogently presented by Prof. Randall Kennedy of Harvard. Kennedy concedes most of the points I have made. Yes, he says:

> Statistics abundantly confirm that African Americans—and particularly young black men—commit a dramatically disproportionate share of street crime in the United States. This is a sociological fact, not a figment of the media's (or the police's) racist imagination. In recent years, for example, victims of crime report blacks as the perpetrators in around 25 per cent of the violent crimes suffered, although blacks constitute only about twelve percent of the nation's population.

And yes, says Prof. Kennedy, outlawing racial profiling will reduce the efficiency of police work. Nonetheless, for constitutional and moral reasons we should outlaw the practice. If this places extra burdens on law enforcement, well, "racial equality, like all good things in life, costs something; it does not come for free."

There are two problems with this. The first is that Kennedy has minimized the black–white difference in criminality, and therefore that "cost." I don't know where his 25 percent comes from, or what "recent years" means, but I do know that in Department of Justice figures for 1997, victims report 60 percent of robberies as having been committed by black persons. In that same year, a black American was eight times more likely than a non-black to commit homicide—and "non-black" here includes Hispanics, not broken out separately in these figures. A racial-profiling ban, under which police officers were required to stop and question suspects in precise proportion to their demographic representation (in what? the precinct population? the state population? the national population?), would lead to *massive* inefficiencies in police work. Which is to say, massive declines in the apprehension of criminals.

The other problem is with the special status that Prof. Kennedy accords to race. Kennedy: "Racial distinctions are and should be different from other lines of social stratification." Thus, if it can be shown, as it surely can, that state troopers stop young people more than old people, relative to young people's numerical representation on the road being patrolled, that is of no consequence. If they stop black people more than white people, on the same criterion, that is of large consequence. This, in spite of the fact that the categories "age" and "race" are both rather fuzzy (define "young") and are both useful predictors of criminality. In spite of the fact, too, that the principle of equality before the law does not, and up to now has never been thought to, guarantee equal outcomes for any law-enforcement process, only that a citizen who has come under reasonable suspicion will be treated fairly.

It is on this special status accorded to race that, I believe, we have gone most seriously astray. I am willing, in fact, to say much more than this: In the matter of race, I think the Anglo-Saxon world has taken leave of its senses. The campaign to ban racial profiling is, as I see it, a part of that large, broad-fronted assault on common sense that our over-educated, over-lawyered society has been enduring for some forty years now, and whose roots are in a fanatical egalitarianism, a grim determination not to face up to the realities of group differences, a theological attachment to the doctrine that the sole and sufficient explanation for all such differences is "racism"—which is to say, the malice and cruelty of white people—and a nursed and petted guilt towards the behavior of our ancestors.

At present, Americans are drifting away from the concept of belonging to a single nation. I do not think this drift will be arrested until we can shed the idea that deference to the sensitivities of racial minorities—however overwrought those sensitivities may be, however over-stimulated by unscrupulous mountebanks, however disconnected from reality—trumps every other consideration, including even the maintenance of social order. To shed that idea, we must confront our national hysteria about race, which causes large numbers of otherwise sane people to believe that the hearts of their fellow citizens are filled with malice towards them. So long as we continue to pander to that poisonous, preposterous belief, we shall only wander off deeper into a wilderness of division, mistrust, and institutionalized rancor—that wilderness, the most freshly painted signpost to which bears the legend RACIAL PROFILING. **NR**

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THE LONG VIEW

By Rob Long

POPPOTUS: Hey! Is that you?
ALBERTGORE: I'm sorry. Do I know you?
POPPOTUS: Al, it's me! It's Bill.
ALBERTGORE: Bill? Bill Clinton?
POPPOTUS: Yeah! This Instant Messaging thing is cool!
ALBERTGORE: I didn't even know you had a computer.
POPPOTUS: I didn't until last week. Barry Diller got it for me. Barbra Streisand got the T-1 line put into the houses. Steve Rattner bought the big dealy with the fast thing—
ALBERTGORE: The server?
POPPOTUS: Yeah! The server.
ALBERTGORE: You've got your own server. Perfect. That's just . . . perfect.
POPPOTUS: Yeah, well, when I saw the guys bringing it up the driveway I was kind of disappointed. I mean, when somebody says they're getting you a "server" to keep you "connected" at a "fast speed," well, my mind kind of pictured something entirely different. But this is pretty nice.
ALBERTGORE: Please take me off your buddy list.
POPPOTUS: C'mon, bud. C'mon.
ALBERTGORE: I'm serious. If you won't, I'll get AOL to block your IM's. I am not kidding.
POPPOTUS: Oh, that reminds me of the coolest thing Steve Case bought me. It's a little deal you clip on your belt and you can send messages back and forth all over the place.
ALBERTGORE: A Blackberry?
POPPOTUS: Yeah! That's it. So I've been zapping messages back and forth to Whoopi Goldberg and those guys all week. So cool.
ALBERTGORE: You know, not that it matters, not that you ever LISTENED to me, but I showed you my Blackberry several times, and tried to get you interested in it, tried to get you to use one, tried to get you to use the computer, tried to get you to use a Palm Pilot—
POPPOTUS: Got one! Nice gift from Denise Rich.
ALBERTGORE: Please take me off your buddy list.
POPPOTUS: What's the big deal?
ALBERTGORE: The big deal? The BIG DEAL? Bill, you somehow managed to leave the White House in a brand new kind of disgrace. It wasn't enough that you were impeached. It wasn't enough that—
POPPOTUS: Fine. Fine. You don't want to be friends, okay, we won't be friends. We'll just pretend we don't know each other when we run into each other in Washington or New York, at dinner parties or the video store or wherever. Well, not the video store, I guess.
ALBERTGORE: Why not the video store?
POPPOTUS: Don't rent those things anymore. Got a plasma screen and a DVD player and a mini dish. Gift from Sumner Redstone. He's good people. I told him, I said, "Sumner, this is all a guy needs to relax. I only wish I had a soft leather recliner to complete the picture, hint hint." And can you guess what happened?
ALBERTGORE: Let me guess. He sent you a leather recliner?
POPPOTUS: Two of 'em!
ALBERTGORE: What a guy. One for you and one for Hillary.
POPPOTUS: Hillary? LOL!
ALBERTGORE: LOL?
POPPOTUS: Yeah, it means—
ALBERTGORE: I KNOW what it means. I knew what it meant way before you even knew anything about it. I practically invented it.
POPPOTUS: ROTFL!
ALBERTGORE: And what does your screen name mean, anyway?
POPPOTUS: The "POP" is for "popular." The "POTUS" is for President of the United States. That's me. POPPOTUS@aol.com. Of course, I have a couple of other names I use when I cruise the chat rooms. I use Prezzidenshal@aol.com when I'm surfing the public-policy sites. I'm LonesomeBill@aol.com when I'm in the M4F chatrooms. And sometimes I'm CuriousAngelika@aol.com, a young college girl looking for other college girls to explore female sexuality with.
ALBERTGORE: PLEASE TAKE ME OFF YOUR BUDDY LIST.
POPPOTUS: What is your problem?
ALBERTGORE: You! You are my problem. You are a shameless, incorrigible egomaniacal freak. You dragged me down into the gutter—I still don't know how—you put some kind of sick voodoo Arkansas spell on me or something—and you can't even just leave me alone. You can't leave anyone alone.
POPPOTUS: I'm getting kind of an unfriendly vibe, here.
ALBERTGORE: You know what? Don't take me off your buddy list, okay? Don't bother. Because I'm not going to use the Internet anymore, okay? Okay? The Internet is now officially yours. You take it. Take it and anything else you want and just leave me alone. Okay? OKAY?
POPPOTUS: You know what you need?
ALBERTGORE: Peace and quiet?
POPPOTUS: Nope. A massage chair. Let me send you one.
ALBERTGORE: No.
POPPOTUS: It's no trouble, really. I got it from the gang at DreamWorks. Great crew.
ALBERTGORE: Please, no.
POPPOTUS: How about some Omaha Steaks? Gift from the Lippo guys?
ALBERTGORE: No, thanks.
POPPOTUS: A cashmere and silk bathrobe? A crystal bell? A world atlas? A box of grapefruit?
ALBERTGORE: No. No.
POPPOTUS: A KitchenAid mixer? A golf-club organizer? A Waverunner? A bread machine? Two vintage Adirondack chairs? A Loro Piana all-weather overcoat? A Specialized RockHopper mountain bike? A digital camera? Diamond cufflinks? The Time-Life "History of Rock 'n' Roll" CD collection? A home-facial steamer? A handheld GPS device? A silver ice bucket? A set of Finnish fish knives? Virtual-reality goggles? A supply of Kiehl's bath and body lotions? A Brioni suit? A Miele vacuum cleaner? Two titanium Prince tennis rackets? A homemade yogurt maker? A Sony Playstation 2? A TiVo recording device? A kayak?
POPPOTUS: Hello?
POPPOTUS: Al?
POPPOTUS: Hello?
>>>ALBERTGORE@aol.com has signed off<<<
>>>NOW ENTERING collegegrrlllchat<<<
CURIOUSANGELIKA: Hi, girls. Is anyone else out there interested in exploring budding female sexuality? **NR**

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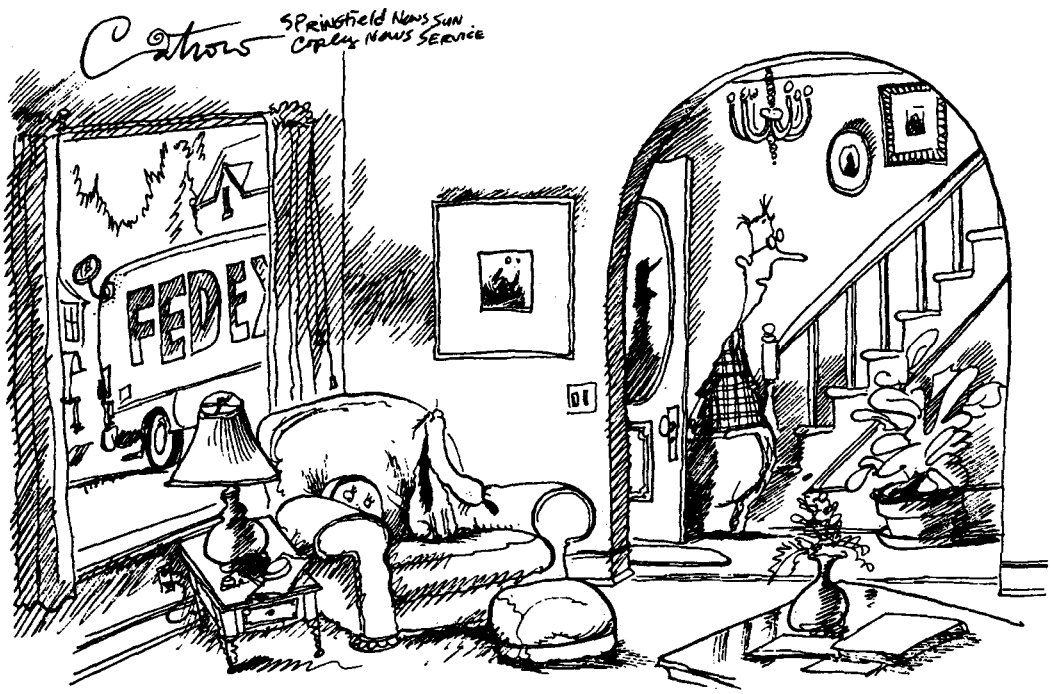
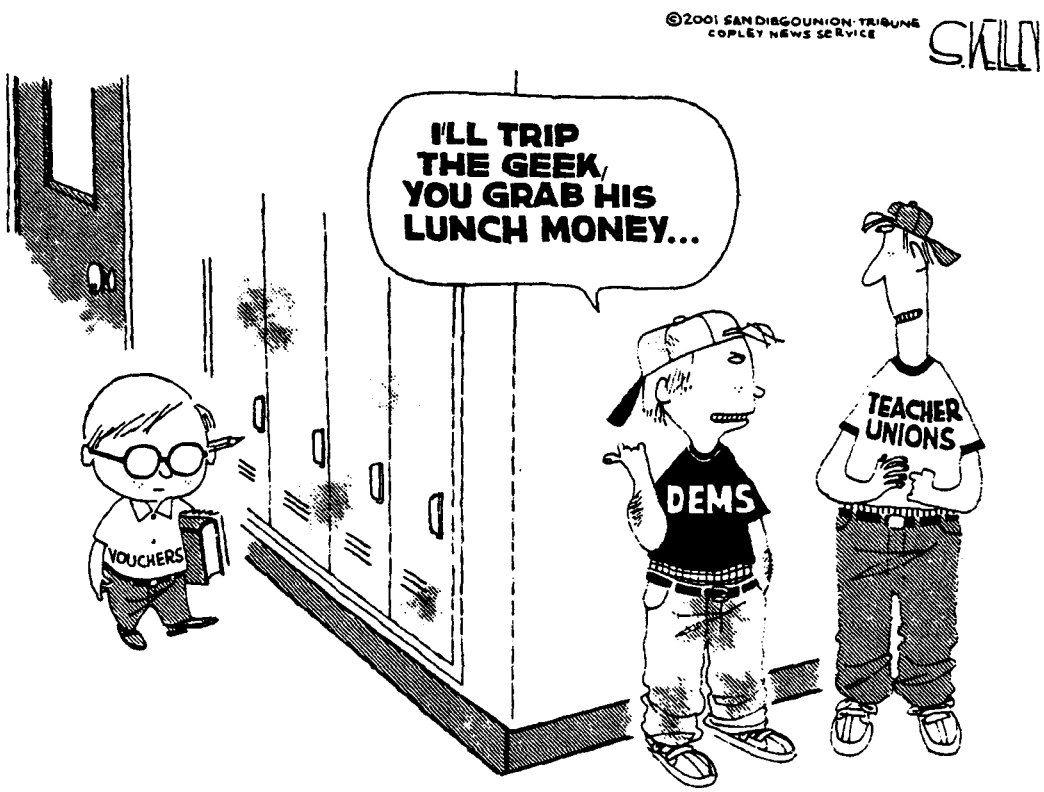


"HONEY, DID WE ORDER TWINS OFF E-BAY?"



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"Vikings versus Dolphins? That doesn't sound very fair!"

Exuberant Rapture

In a Humphrey-Hawkins talk
Watched by Wall Street as a hawk
Monitors a limping mole,
Alan Greenspan tossed some coal
On George Bush's tax-cut plan,
Prompting Lott to blow and fan
While O'Neill sneaked kerosene
On the four-alarmer scene.

—W. H. von Dreele

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Reagan in Full

JAY NORDLINGER

Reagan, In His Own Hand: The Writings of Ronald Reagan That Reveal His Revolutionary Vision for America, edited by Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson, and Martin Anderson (Free Press, 549 pp., $30)

WE were awfully excited when we first heard about it—"we" being Reaganauts (to use the original term), and "it" being a cache of documents in the former president's own hand. We had always known he was an inveterate writer, and a formidable one. And now we would be able to prove it to the world.

And that is a problem we Reagan champions have: always trying to prove that our man—undeniably a politician and leader of great skill—was an intellectual force as well. This has become an exhausting, sometimes pathetic mission. The strength of Reagan's mind has long been obvious to anyone who has given the man two seconds' thought; but, of course, many people—many influential people—are unwilling to put in a good two seconds. To them, Reagan will always be, if not quite a boob, a lightweight all the same—a lucky innocent, who stumbled onto some success as president.

About that cache of documents: Not long ago, a scholar from Carnegie Mellon, Kiron K. Skinner, was poking around Reagan's private papers for a study of the Cold War. And among those papers she found a treasure-trove of manuscripts—true manuscripts, which is to say, documents written by hand. These were radio addresses that Reagan had given between the years 1975 and 1979 (after he left the governorship of California and before he became president of the United States). There were almost 700 of them, and they showed Reagan in something close to his fullness. Together with the Hoover Institution's Martin and Annelise Anderson—veteran Reaganauts—Skinner assembled the manuscripts into this present, extraordinary volume: *Reagan, In His Own Hand*. And these writings really do, as the subtitle proclaims, "reveal" our 40th president's "revolutionary vision for America."

He was one of the great proselytizers of recent history, Reagan. He was a pamphleteer, an arguer, a persuader, a propagandist, at times an evangelist—restless and relentless. He was a shy, remote man, as we all know, but he had what must have been a compulsion to take the public by the arm and say, "See? This is the way it is. Did you hear about this? Did you ever consider that?"

And he was always writing. He seemed not only to like to write, but to need to do so. He wrote from childhood, and he always wrote well—solidly and often stylishly. Over nine decades, he wrote thousands of letters, including 276 to a pen pal who was president of a Reagan (movie) fan club. He wrote for his school newspapers, he wrote a sports column for the *Des Moines Dispatch*, he wrote speeches and statements as a union leader, he wrote as a corporate spokesman, he wrote as a political candidate, he wrote as a governor and as a president—he never stopped, at least until the day in 1994 when he wrote a stunning, heartbreaking letter to his fellow Americans, explaining why he had to withdraw from public life. In 1947, when Reagan was 36, a reporter profiling him observed, "In private life, Reagan is most interested in writing." Reagan lived a life of words. Constant, well-chosen, in the end, world-changing words.

The mid-'70s radio addresses were five minutes long, and they were to be delivered five days a week. Along with his newspaper column (which, unlike the radio speeches, was largely ghosted), they were Reagan's principal means of keeping in touch with the public between campaigns. The editors reproduce the manuscripts exactly as they are, with crossings-out and additions and marginal notes and misspellings and mispunctuation and instructions to the typist—everything. Now, I myself do not see the point of retaining misspellings and mispunctuation. Anyone can appreciate the drive for authenticity, but these oddities are distracting, and contribute little. Also, Reagan did not intend for the public to see his scribbles; he wrote privately and probably hurriedly, and he wrote in a kind of shorthand. The spelling and punctuation, in my view, should have been regularized, if only as a courtesy to the author.

For these addresses, Reagan wrote to

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a precise length, and he did so with no evident struggle—his revisions are relatively few (and they are almost invariably improvements). He took a break from the broadcasts to wage his 1976 campaign against President Ford for the Republican nomination. (In the interim, Sen. Barry Goldwater took over the radio job.) He resumed two weeks after the party's convention. And he never lost the bug to communicate by radio: As president, he instituted a weekly radio address, a practice copied by his successors.

These writings are Reagan in essence. They are profound and simple. They are folksy and informed. They are gutsy and gentle, meek and bold, indignant and relaxed. They have a little poetry, and a lot of prose (Reagan was addicted to facts and figures, and to logic; he indulges in almost no platitudes or flights of rhetoric). They are utterly natural, never contrived (professional showman though Reagan may have been). They always respect the dignity and intelligence of the audience. They show a basic sympathy for people—especially for those bent under tyranny—and they show a love of life. They show religious faith. And they show a strange, almost unbelievable patriotism.

The broadcasts bring to mind Paul Harvey, and Rush Limbaugh, and Milton Friedman's old *Free to Choose* series. One nice thing about them is that they provide a walk down Memory Lane, issues-wise: oil, the Humphrey-Hawkins bill, Namibia! Reagan would write about anything and everything, drawing from a variety of sources (and not only *Human Events*). It seems that nothing failed to engage his attention, large or small. He was endlessly curious, his mind always moving. How about this speech by Eugene Rostow, or this column by James Burnham, or this memoir from this new dissident, Bukovsky? Did you hear what happened to the refusednik Ida Nudel? Whaddya say we write the embassy? And if the Soviets could lie so flagrantly about the Katyn Forest—history matters immensely—could they be trusted on anything?

He would begin with a little enticer, such as, "If you thought the United Nations was a debating society, brace yourselves." And he liked to end with some quiet zinger. After a fairly high-minded discussion of the East–West drama, he says, "Détente: Isn't that what a farmer has with his turkey—until Thanksgiving?" Effortlessly, he mixed the high and the low. Talking about the importance of strength to deterrence, he would cite Paul Nitze, but also Will Rogers, who once quipped, "I've never seen anyone insult Jack Dempsey."

He had a clear, orderly mind, that could take an issue and wrestle it down. In October 1975, for example, he considered the Russian wheat deal, a complicated, hotly debated question. We can see the train of his thought as he considers every angle—the economic, the strategic, and the moral. Reagan winds up favoring the deal. But the larger, long-term "moral question," Reagan warns—the question of whether to do anything to sustain the Soviet economy, and thus that rule—"won't go away." For Reagan, it always came down to the moral question. We see in these radio addresses that his project, fundamentally, was moral.

■

The trait that shines most brightly through these pages is goodness.

■

Of the famed Reagan wit, there is plenty: "No wonder Gromyko describes negotiations as 'business-like & useful.' Translated from the Russian, that means, 'Uncle Sam has been skinned again.'" And there is considerable humility. Asks Reagan, "What should the United Nations' duty be to people who are subjected to vicious and inhumane torture?" (He is thinking now about that eternally vexing question: Africa.) "I must confess I don't know the answer." But Reagan dwells on the matter with utmost care, and power.

And then there is that patriotism, a patriotism that seems to make the country new again: "Every once in a while, all of us native-born Americans should make it a point to have a conversation with one who is an American by choice. They have a perspective on this country we can never have. They can do a lot to firm up our resolve to be free for another 200 yrs."

So gleaming is this volume, you could quote from almost any page. Readers may take particular delight in a robust defense of the Electoral College, made in April 1977, after Vice President Mondale proposed eliminating it. With the patience and precision of a fine civics teacher, Reagan makes the case for republican government. In a purely popular referendum, he notes, "a half-dozen rural states could show a majority for one candidate and be outvoted by one big industrial state opting for his opponent. Presidential candidates would be tempted to aim their campaigns & their promises at a cluster of metropolitan areas in a few states, and the smaller states would be without a voice." You don't say.

For me, the trait that shines most brightly through these pages is goodness—a core, manifest goodness. Here is one marginal note—or, rather, message—I especially love: It is from Reagan to his typist. At the bottom of a speech, Reagan (who often wrote while he was traveling) jots, "Sorry, the plane was bouncing around." Just a small thing, but telling. And then there is his first address after the 1976 presidential campaign. He speaks of the people he met all over the country, who stood in the rain for him, and listened to him, and solemnly weighed their choice—"the campaign trail is no place for the cynic." And with all those conscientious Americans, "only the world's worst scoundrel could intentionally let them down."

The final section of the book is given over to sundry writings, beginning with some juvenilia (which are exceptional—any mother, or teacher, would bubble over with pride) and ending with that 1994 farewell letter. The Hollywood diary, the correspondence, the slashing, expertly crafted political speeches—all are remarkable.

But if I could single out just one item, from the entire volume, it would be a 1971 letter—very long—written to the editor of a student publication at Eureka College, Reagan's alma mater. The paper has obviously denounced Reagan as a Neanderthal and foe of academic freedom, incapable of understanding the current generation. So the governor of California takes the time to explain himself and to teach these students something about philosophy, and free-

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dom, and history. Is Reagan really a benighted right-winger? "The first speech quoted [in the student attack] was made in 1966 before I was Gov. and while I was still making my living in Hollywood (I just slipped that latter point in, hoping you'd be reminded that Hollywood is not exactly a symbol of prudishness and sheltered living)."

Complains Reagan, "With a sureness that almost amounts to arrogance, the author of the article describes my generation of Eureka students as some kind of Rover Boys gaily playing pranks between classes in which we submitted cheerfully to being spoon-fed the customs and mores of the past. *Never* has the past been so open to question as it was in that long-ago time." For "we came to college age in the midst of a social and economic upheaval, the Great Depression, which was for real. Life was a very grim business, but somehow we managed to keep a sense of humor, which I have difficulty finding, at least on our Calif. campuses today. And we presided over the greatest econ. & social revolution the world has ever seen."

"True education," Reagan concludes, "is society's attempt to enunciate certain ultimate values upon which individuals & hence society may safely build. You have every right to ask the reason behind the mores & customs of what we refer to as civilization. Challenge, we can afford. You have no right & it makes no sense to reject the wisdom of the ages simply because it is rooted in the past. Challenge—but weigh the answers to your challenge very carefully." Ultimately, "true freedom is the freedom of self-discipline—the freedom to choose within acceptable standards. Take that framework away & you lose freedom."

This letter—which must be read in its entirety, excerpts failing to do it justice—is a small political masterpiece.

But there's more: Reagan sends a copy of his letter to the college's president, with a note saying, "I thought you might like to see this in case the editor chooses to keep it to himself." Think of it: Reagan was governor of California, a major national figure, and Eureka's most important alumnus, by far. And he not only pauses to compose this weighty letter—which must be the most significant document ever to reach that humble publication—but realizes that the punk editor may deep-six it!

So, how did this happen? How did it happen that Reagan—endowed with so great, and so obvious, a mental gift—was ever regarded as a simpleton? In a foreword to this book, George Shultz writes, "I could tell dozens of stories about specific times when Ronald Reagan displayed detailed knowledge about policy issues, and when he took decisive action based on that knowledge—without the benefit of someone whispering in his ear or sliding a note into his hand. But so ingrained is the belief that he was an amiable man—not too bright, the willing captive of his aides—that it would probably not make much difference." This may be so.

But when excerpts from the book appeared in the *The New York Times Magazine*, I got a marveling phone call from an old friend, reared in the liberal Democratic (and Reagan-hating, or at least -belittling) faith. "Can you believe it?" he said. "Can you believe how impressive these things are? They are completely at odds with the image we have of him." I could only respond, Reagan-style, "What do you mean 'we,' Kemosabe?"

Reagan-lovers will gulp down this book, and fall in love all over again; others—if they are open-minded, like my friend—will be affected. Whatever else the collection does, it proves that Reagan, in addition to the many other things he was, was a writer. As president in particular, he would have many top-flight speechwriters—Tony Dolan, Bentley Elliott, Peggy Noonan, Peter Robinson, John Podhoretz—but I think that all of them would agree that no one ever wrote for Reagan better than he wrote for himself, when he could.

I close by noting that *Reagan, In His Own Hand* carries a most unusual, and poignant, dedication: "For Ronald Reagan, who wrote the documents." For several years now, we have grown accustomed to thinking and talking about Reagan in the past tense. It cannot be helped. But we should also note that Reagan turned 90 on February 6. And after reading and rubbing my eyes at this astounding book, I can only blurt out: Hail to the Chief. **NR**

Sick Thoughts

J. BOTTUM

Culture of Death: The Assault on Medical Ethics in America, by Wesley J. Smith (Encounter, 285 pp., $23.95)

The stories Wesley J. Smith has to tell are appalling. If you have any doubt about the corruption of modern medicine, you need to read the anecdotes scattered through *Culture of Death: The Assault on Medical Ethics in America*. The sick man forced to call 911 from his hospital bed because the medical staff categorized him as beyond help. The elderly woman left to die in pain because the nursing home declared her life not worth the cost of her care. The unconscious teenager sentenced to death by untreated fever because his doctor decided his life was "effectively over."

The solution to the sickness that has infected American medical care, however, requires not only that we recoil at the symptoms, but that we grasp the underlying disease. And that proves, in certain ways, the harder task. For while we register our indignation at this or that horror story—thinking each an abuse of a system still basically Hippocratic, still primarily concerned with the saving of life—the engine of "bioethics" rolls silently on. Every day, another hospital board is captured, another treatment protocol is redefined, another medical student takes a course in physician-assisted suicide, another HMO is told that the money-saving measure of euthanasia is an ethically justifiable form of "care for the terminally ill."

It is to expose this disease that Wesley Smith has written *Culture of Death*. A lawyer by training, he has assembled what is, in essence, a brief against bioethics as it is presented in America's premier philosophy departments, think tanks, and

Mr. Bottum is books & arts editor of *The Weekly Standard*.

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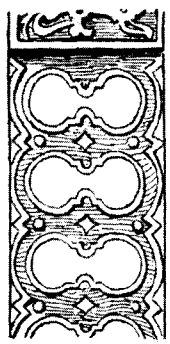
scholarly journals. Nearly everyone has heard about Jack Kevorkian's serial-killing of people whose main problems were depression and bad pain control, just as nearly everyone has heard about Peter Singer's appointment to a chair at Princeton University as a reward for proclaiming that a baby is of less value than a pig. But the shocking thing that Smith reveals is just how casually approved is the theory that justifies Kevorkian and Singer in places like Georgetown University's Kennedy Institute of Ethics, the Hastings Center, and the *New England Journal of Medicine*—the institutions to which American medicine looks for ethical guidance.



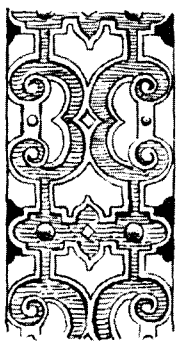
It's not the cranks with mimeograph machines in their basements who want to kill you. The philosophers who assume that some lives are not worth living, the activists who believe that the infirm have a duty to die, the doctors who study the mechanics of killing their patients: *They* are now the threat, and they are establishment in America today. Of course, the irrepressible Peter Singer is in the lead. There's a chapter in his latest book, *Writings on an Ethical Life*, called "Euthanasia: Emerging from Hitler's Shadow," which may make you wonder how far we are from a Princeton professor writing "Anti-Semitism: Emerging from Hitler's Shadow." But Singer is, in fact, merely less circumspect than his colleagues. Wesley Smith reveals a world of well-rewarded establishment figures who "reject what until now has been the core value of Western civilization: that all human beings possess equal moral worth."

In the seven central chapters in *Culture of Death*, Smith lays out the assault on the traditional ethics that once assumed that the saving of individual lives was medicine's highest concern. He shows how "patient autonomy" became the mantra that justified passive abandonment and even active killing of sick people. He rages against "the bioethics-driven medical policy called Futile Care Theory," by which, he argues, hospitals require doctors to give up on whole classes of their patients. He excoriates current models for rationing health care, arguing that they all assume individual lives are fungible and disposable. He points out how the public's acquiescence in organ donation from the dead has emboldened theorists to demand organ donation from the living. He demonstrates that the clamor for animal rights serves primarily not to elevate animal life but to depreciate human life. And he ends with a call for a "'human-rights' bioethics"—a medical ethics that reembraces the old, Hippocratic love of life and rejects the eugenic flirtation with death.

In his relentless attack in *Culture of Death*, Smith scatters some of his shot. He is not entirely fair, for example, in his complete rejection of Daniel Callahan, co-founder of the Hastings Center and probably the most respected bioethicist alive, just because the man once proposed medical rationing. (Although it has to be admitted that Callahan, in his decades spent trying to dance at everyone's ball—to be a liberal among liberals and a conservative among conservatives—has not always been entirely fair to himself.)

As a matter of logic, Smith is clearly wrong not to connect euthanasia and abortion. But as a matter of persuasion, he may be right.

So, too, Smith may be right that we should reject utilitarianism in its totality, but it is not clear he understands that Peter Singer, for example, represents the triumph of one school of utilitarianism over a potentially less-dangerous school—or that much bioethical theory isn't utilitarian at all, but derives instead from the lethal mixture of home-grown American philosophical pragmatism and radical European liberationism that has infected so much of our nation's culture.



Indeed, it is exactly this point that produces the one real problem in *Culture of Death*. Smith relies finally on a sensibility rather than a philosophy: What contemporary bioethics creates are practices that feel like murder, and therefore its philosophical underpinnings must be wrong.

It's unreasonable, of course, to complain that Smith lacks a sufficient philosophical anthropology to complete his indictment of bioethicists. But you can see one ill effect in Smith's nearly complete ignoring of abortion, which he avoids in a way one would not have thought possible in a book entitled *Culture of Death*.

And you can see a worse effect when the question arises of what we should do about it all. At times Smith argues that bioethicists are the "new high priests," imposing their vile eugenics on a helpless populace. But at other times, he suggests that bioethicists are only mirroring, in philosophical ethics, an anti-life corruption that has been growing in the whole society since the 1960s. If the problem lies in the culture, why bother with the bioethicists, who are simply its mouthpiece? And if the problem lies in a philosophical elite, what good does it do to attack them with nonphilosophical arguments?

The answer, Smith would probably say, lies in the nature of democratic action. Smith is an old Naderite; before he took up the battle against the new medical ethics with his excellent 1997 book *Forced Exit*, he cowrote four books with Ralph Nader, and he dedicates *Culture of Death* to Nader. Most of the time, Smith's Naderism shows up only as a fading echo of the style of argument he used to make. *Culture of Death* has, for example, a slight preference for populist economics: We should be especially frightened by euthanasia because it allows large corporate HMOs to put the poor at risk. And there's a slight aiming of the book at liberals—as though the best way to fight the evils of bioethics is to convince us that the pro-life cause properly belongs to caring liberals rather than heartless conservatives.

As a matter of logic, Smith is clearly wrong not to connect euthanasia and abortion. But as a matter of persuasion,

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he may be right. There is not the least purchase on liberals right now for an antiabortion argument; liberalism in America has boiled down, in fact, to little except support for abortion. But euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide may not be quite so politically defining. Contemporary liberals will actually sit still long enough to hear an argument about how, for example, the poor are put at risk by murderous bioethical theories gladly embraced by big insurance companies and HMOs.

And how does that make a difference? Wesley Smith's old-fashioned Naderism shows up most of all in his belief that democratic action can be successful because elites are forced to hide in plain sight. In their publications and notes and conferences, they say things to one another that they don't want us to listen to. And when a populace that still believes in caring, life-affirming doctors finds out what is actually dominating medicine, it will rise up in righteous anger and change things.

■

Smith has no equal in bringing an indictment against what is transforming medical care.

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In this case, he may be correct. Certainly Smith has no equal in bringing an indictment against what is transforming medical care. He is exactly right to focus our attention on the bioethicists who provide the theories that allow or, when adopted by a hospital or HMO as a treatment protocol, actually compel doctors to murder.

You probably missed the places where they did this. Who wants to read technical journals in bioethics? Who imagines that they have actual influence in the immediate world in which we live? Well, Wesley Smith has read them, and he demonstrates that, hidden in plain sight, each little article in the *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* or the *Hastings Center Report* adds another blade to the harrow that wants to put you out of your suffering the next time you fall ill. Read *Culture of Death*. Your life may depend on it. **NR**

Refried Beans

STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

The Years with Laura Díaz, by Carlos Fuentes (Farrar, Straus, 516 pp., $26)

CARLOS FUENTES has benefited from a kind of literary affirmative action: He is Mexico's best-known novelist and therefore considered its most talented and accomplished, with an oeuvre that is important because it is . . . important. However, any talent he previously showed has slipped badly, and he is now in decline.

In *The Years with Laura Díaz*, Fuentes has produced a politically correct female equivalent to his most famous work, *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, published in the U.S. in 1964. *Artemio Cruz* was a brilliantly nuanced chronicle of modern Mexico through the life of a single character, a veteran of the Revolution who becomes corrupted by the success of the revolutionary elite. But despite the author's leftist sympathies, *Artemio Cruz* was by no means ideologically simplistic, since Fuentes's goal was to examine Mexican reality critically. He now seeks merely to burnish the self-image of the Mexican cultural elite.

Ostensibly, *The Years with Laura Díaz* presents a look at Mexican history from 1905 to 1972 through the life of a female lumpen intellectual—an associate of the Mexican painters Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo who eventually emerges as a successful photographer in her own right. It soon becomes clear, however, that Fuentes is much less concerned with an exploration of Mexican life than with a reaffirmation of leftist clichés. The book opens in Detroit in 1999, where the heroine's great-grandson has gone to film a television documentary on one of Rivera's murals. Wandering in the ghetto and photographing its denizens, "insolently, idly, provocatively," he is predictably mugged. As if such a violent public attack on a foreigner were more common in Detroit than in Mexico City.

The narrative follows the eponymous heroine from her childhood in a well-off Mexican family through her adolescence in a landscape familiar to readers of "magical-realist" works such as those of Gabriel García Márquez. When she reaches adulthood, some real figures from Mexican cultural history appear, and when she gravitates to the circle of Rivera and Kahlo, she begins her artistic career. But after she marries Juan Francisco López, a trade-union leader, the book becomes an increasingly talky affair. Successive historical dramas—the Spanish Civil War, the Holocaust, the exodus of North American Communists to Mexico, the shooting of radical students in 1968—serve mainly as pretexts for wooden conversations, strung together to approximate a lifetime. The timeline is alleviated by uninspired meditations on the decline of Laura's passion for her husband and the depressing quality of her affairs with other men, and by family vignettes of little vigor: The generations die, and Laura mourns somewhat halfheartedly.

Much is missing from this book—indeed, everything that would have made it an authentic chronicle of Mexican reality. Unlike *Artemio Cruz*, which successfully accounted for the range of human experiences in the revolutionary epoch from the bottom to the top of society, this is essentially a party-line history of Mexico as seen only from the capital and in the minds of its leftist elite. In this legendary place, Mexican intellectuals are heroes of cultural resistance against North American vulgarity and stupidity, and protectors of the diminishing revolutionary tradition.

Laura's biography includes more than a few borrowings from those of Fuentes and Kahlo, a feminist icon worldwide. But as in his other recent books, Fuentes has not done his homework. Like his novel *The Old Gringo*, based on the life of Ambrose Bierce, who disappeared in Mexico in 1914, *Laura Díaz* is replete with anachronisms, gaffes, and legendry. When this

Mr. Schwartz is completing an expanded, Spanish-language edition of his *Incidents in the Life of Benjamin Péret*, a study of exiled European writers in Mexico during World War II.

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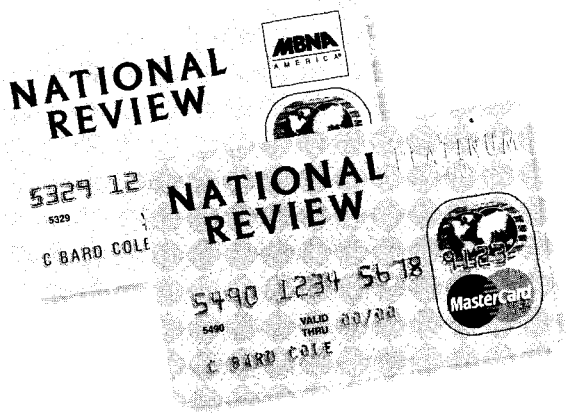

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book came out in Spanish, the Mexican critic José Emilio Pacheco noted that "although Fuentes has read everything and naturally knows the correct dates," people are said to read various books and dance to popular tunes years before they are composed. Other instances involve revisionism disguised as historical novelizing. Thus Laura's lover, Harry Jaffe, a self-exiled Hollywood radical, complains that the Communist actor John Garfield "wasn't guilty of anything. But they accused him of everything, of signing petitions in favor of Stalin during the Moscow purges." However, Garfield did in fact put his name to a statement by "American progressives" endorsing the Moscow trials, published on April 28, 1938, in the *Daily Worker*.

Even stranger is Fuentes's treatment of one of the main elements in the biography of Rivera and Kahlo, and arguably one of the most dramatic episodes in Mexican history: the arrival of Trotsky in Mexico City as the guest of the artistic couple in 1937, followed by his assassination in 1940. Although Laura is in and out of the Rivera-Kahlo studio, and Fuentes's strawmen argue in a bloodless sort of way over the morality of Stalinism, the Russian heretic is only mentioned as an abstraction. This is peculiar when one considers that Trotsky was under the protection of leftist president Lázaro Cárdenas, and that the Mexican Communists were permanently stigmatized because of their involvement in the case.

If Fuentes really wants to examine the history of the Mexican intelligentsia as he once did that of the revolutionary veterans, he would have to return to the issue he addressed in his first novels: the corruption of the whole of civil society by the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI. Their sleaze appears in this narrative through Laura's husband, whose trade-union militancy gives way to bureaucratic banality, and through her children, who work for crooked government agencies. Laura confesses to herself that her husband is "corrupt . . . mediocre . . . an ambitious man unworthy of his ambition." But unlike him—and unlike the fictional Artemio Cruz, who also is morally destroyed by the "institutionalization of the revolution"—Laura remains pure and unsoiled.

Obviously, Laura Díaz is intended to symbolize hope in the Revolution, a bright alternative of conscience. But this is profoundly dishonest: In the real Mexico it was the leftist Lauras who became corrupted first, even before the revolutionary leadership lost its élan. Selling out their creative independence in return for a secure income, they fluttered back and forth through art galleries, magazines, government ministries, faculties, publishing houses, and diplomatic postings, under the patronage of the PRI. That's why Mexico City today has more than 25 daily newspapers—to make work for all those high-minded, leftist, gringo-hating writers on the government dole. That's also how Fuentes himself landed a posting as ambassador to France from 1975–77.

This novel is as short on character development as it is long—very long—on ideology. There's tons of kindergarten Marxism here: extensive discussions of the ins and outs of Mexican radical politics, and (inaccurate) gossip about the leaders of the Spanish Republic. Many of the pseudohistorical references will go unrecognized by younger Mexican readers, to say nothing of those north of the border, for whom, ultimately, this book seems to have been intended. After all, Mexicans are no longer greatly excited by Fuentes, or by Frida Kahlo for that matter; her museum in the capital attracts only foreign tourists.

That's part of the pathetic fallacy of the highbrow historical romance. Readers enjoy the belief that they are learning something while ploughing through clichéd sex scenes, and that the past was just as they imagined it—a bad imitation of a Rivera mural, full of good guys and bad guys. But Fuentes has added something distinctively rotten to this recipe. In progressing from *Artemio Cruz* to *Laura Díaz*, he has moved from an honest confrontation with the mess that was made of the Mexican Revolution to a dishonest masquerade that seeks to prettify the tragedy. It is doubtful that his American readers will realize that they have in their hands a cultural artifact as artificial and discredited as one of Frida Kahlo's admiring portraits of Stalin. **NR**

Endless Siege

JAY WINIK

A Line in the Sand: The Alamo in Blood and Memory, by Randy Roberts and James S. Olson (Free Press, 356 pp., $26)

FOR good reason, this story is the stuff of legends. On February 23, 1836, amid fierce winds, hail, and frigid temperatures, the siege of the Alamo began. Inside, the defenders—a motley crew that included Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, and Col. William Barrett Travis—were known as "Texians," "Texans," or "Tejanos," but to Santa Anna—the commanding general of all the Mexican armies, the Napoleon of the West, the *Benemérito de la Patria* ("Hero of the Fatherland")—they were mere rabble. "These Texans," Santa Anna sneered, "are the least advanced in civilization, ignorant of war, incapable of discipline." And he meant to teach them a lesson. "I shall send four to six thousand men to Texas with the purpose of punishing those turbulent, insolent North Americans," he bellowed, "and I shall convert Texas into a desert."

Actually, Santa Anna intended more than that. He expected to sweep across Texas, across North America (much as Napoleon had cut a swath through Europe), and march his legion into Washington, D.C., where he would fly the Mexican flag over the Capitol. Standing in his way were 187 men, woefully armed, inadequately fed, and holed up in a dilapidated mission never designed to do more than repulse minor Indian attacks.

Col. Travis knew the situation was dire, and he pleaded to the provisional Texas government, "Give me help, oh my country!" But none was forthcoming. In turn, he sent an open letter to Texas and the world: "I shall never sur-

Mr. Winik's latest book, *April 1865: The Month That Saved America*, will be published in April.

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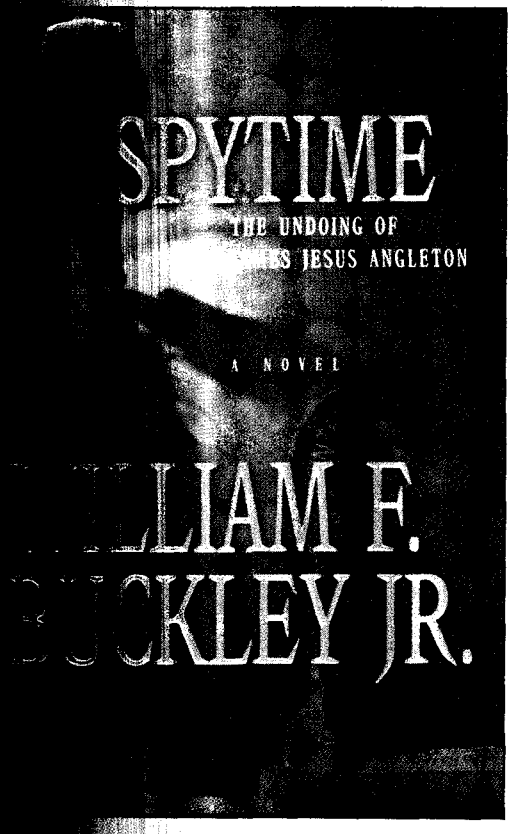

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render or retreat . . . VICTORY or DEATH." Maneuvering his gargantuan forces into position, Santa Anna meant to oblige the latter. He ominously raised a blood red flag, adorned with a skull, a mere thousand yards from the Alamo. Its unmistakable meaning: death to all who opposed him.

In the predawn darkness on Day 13 of the siege, Santa Anna's all-out attack began. Some 90 minutes later, the battle was over. As the sun rose, it revealed a slaughter-field: 800 corpses, on both sides; all the Texans dead. And they would not even be given a decent burial; by midday, they would be ablaze on a funeral pyre.

Yet remarkably, for the Alamo, this was just the beginning. Weeks later, when Gen. Sam Houston and his forces routed Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto in a mere 18 minutes—it was a stunning surprise attack—their rallying cry was "Remember the Alamo!" From then on, the Alamo would become an indelible part of the American lexicon. But as historians Randy Roberts and James S. Olson remind us in *A Line in the Sand: The Alamo in Blood and Memory*, for more than 160 years disputes have raged over exactly what happened at the Alamo, why, and how it should be remembered. Thus, the authors write, the battle over the Alamo's memory has become "as vibrant in its own way as the real battle."

For starters, who were these legendary Texans? Many were land-hungry settlers, joined together in an improbable mix of army regulars and volunteers. We are told they were uncouth and unruly, reckless and argumentative, often more interested in drinking than in working (or fighting). But whatever their eccentricities, they believed deeply in freedom, and saw the American Founding Fathers as demigods. And they were colorful ("Some were for independence," observed one Texan at the time, "and some were for anything, just as long as it was a row"). But were they unmitigated racists, as so much recent Alamo scholarship paints them? Yes, say Roberts and Olson, but no less so than the Mexicans. (Indeed, "the Texas revolution," write the authors, "constituted a struggle for power between two groups of equally prejudiced people.")

Roberts and Olson spend a considerable amount of time clarifying embellished myths. We commonly think of Santa Anna's army—the exquisitely outfitted dragoons and cavalrymen, the infantry and heavy artillery, and the long lines of men and matériel, stretching over tens and tens of miles—as being indomitable. In fact, the authors note, the army was hastily pressed together, many soldiers were totally untrained or didn't speak Spanish, some were even forced conscripts (bound together with chains, and often without shoes), and a good number were living on minimal rations (a half-serving of hardtack once a day). As for Santa Anna himself, he had slipped "into madness," and his strategic vision bordered on "lunacy."

Does this diminish the valor of those inside the Alamo? Not at all. If Santa Anna's army was flawed, the situation of the Texans was desperate—and the men knew it. In fact, the famed Jim Bowie originally was sent by Sam Houston simply to consider blowing up the fort. Meanwhile, the command arrangements inside the Alamo were, by any standards, bizarre: The irascible William Travis was in control of the regular troops, while the irrepressible Bowie—who, when he wasn't drinking and cussing, was flat on his back suffering from chills and shakes—was in command of the volunteers; all orders had to be cosigned. Worse, as word of their imminent plight reached the provisional Texan government, some of the politicians openly dismissed it as hyperbole; Sam Houston called it "damn lies" and thought Travis was seeking only to "sustain his popularity."

■

The Alamo became a bold symbol of the American spirit and an inspiration during national crises.

■

And, of course, no amount of courage could compensate for the shortage of men and matériel and supplies. They knew they would be slaughtered, but fought anyway, which is part of their romantic appeal. Did Travis, as legend would have it, really draw a line in the sand and invite all those who wished to fight and die to cross? The answer, suggest Roberts and Olson, is yes—and all but one of the men stepped across the line. "Certainly it was a melodramatic gesture," they write, "but it was a melodramatic age, and Travis was far more melodramatic than most."

While the first half of *A Line in the Sand* deals with the battle itself, the second half revolves around the Alamo's role in the minds of Americans, in fact and myth. As decades passed, the Alamo became a bold symbol of the American spirit and an inspiration during national crises: In the years after the Civil War, it helped prevent "Lost Cause-ism" from enveloping Texas as it did other southern states; during World Wars I and II, it became a proud symbol of liberty; in the Cold War's early years, it became a vivid rendition of "freedom's last stand"; and during the Vietnam years, it became a touchstone for President Lyndon Johnson. And its most compelling figure, Davy Crockett, as portrayed by Walt Disney's Fess Parker and then the inimitable John Wayne, became a hero and a legend for an entire baby-boomer generation (which, as Roberts and Olson wryly note, "must have made a dent in the raccoon population").

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But by the late 1960s, the authors tell us, the Alamo, like so many other hallowed institutions, had fallen on hard times, an early casualty of the culture wars. The men of the Alamo, once revered, suddenly became, in the words of revisionist historian Jeff Long, "ignorant trigger-pulling white trash," while budding history scholars likened them to Nazis. Even the venerable Crockett, long regarded as a freedom fighter, public servant (a former congressman, he was once talked about as a Whig presidential candidate), backwoods philosopher, and prototypical American frontiersman, abruptly became a "phony" (Arthur Schlesinger's word); "barely literate" (E. J. Kahn Jr., writing in *The New Yorker*); and "purchasable for no more than a drink" (Murray Kempton). (William F. Buckley Jr. was one of the few to rise to Crockett's defense, exclaiming that this was in part a "traditional debunking campaign" by "liberal publicists . . . He'll survive the carpers.") As the 1990s rolled around, New Western historians deemed the Alamo little more than another brutal story of white-imperialist oppression and exploitation; by then, it was no surprise when Chicano Marxists insisted, in all sincerity, that the defenders of the Alamo "sucked the blood of the Chicano people."

Roberts and Olson, who previously collaborated on *John Wayne: American*, do a meticulous job in bringing this momentous battle to life and in creatively exploring its impact on our culture and collective memory. One wishes, however, that they could have avoided the choice to make the format half-narrative, half-essay—an otherwise fine narrative thread is hindered as a result (and this nostalgic fan of westerns winced upon seeing John Wayne's *The Alamo* described as a "long, preachy melodrama"). Still, it is both good and timely to have this book.

Is there a final verdict on the Alamo? Perhaps one need look no further than John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign in 1960. After speaking at the Alamo, JFK had hoped to avoid the gridlocked courtyard. Turning to his host, a Daughter of the Republic of Texas, he asked for the Alamo's back door. "Senator," she returned, "there are no back doors at the Alamo. Only heroes." **NR**

■ **FILM** ■

Bitter and Sweet

JOHN SIMON

WHEN, in 1957, the Swiss playwright and novelist Friedrich Dürrenmatt wrote his novella *Das Versprechen* (*The Pledge*), he subtitled it *Requiem for the Crime Novel*. It has a framing story: A retired Zurich police chief reminisces to Dürrenmatt, author of thrillers, about a poor, semidemented gas-station operator, waiting for someone the fellow keeps insisting will come. This wreck of a man is the former inspector Matthäi, once the chief's most gifted sleuth.

Years ago, when he was about to retire, Matthäi was nevertheless drawn into the case of a murdered 14-year-old girl found in the bushes. In the movie version of ***The Pledge***, directed by Sean Penn, the girl becomes an eight-year-old who was also raped, which, presumably, makes things more interesting for American moviegoers. The screenwriters, the Pole Jerzy Kromolowski and his American wife, Mary Olson-Kromolowski, met as students at the University of Copenhagen, and have had fetchingly motley careers.

These are no garden-variety scenarists. Their script, transposing the action to the vicinity of Reno, and greatly expanding the novella while remaining faithful to its essence, is far superior to Penn's two previous directorial ventures, *Indian Runner* and *The Crossing Guard*. Matthäi has become detective Jerry Black (Jack Nicholson), who likewise promises the victim's distraught mother that he'll find the killer, and goes to almost insane lengths to do it.

The process whereby a fellow cop (the good Aaron Eckhart) extracts a confession from a retarded Indian (the always fascinating Benicio Del Toro) is as subduedly harrowing as a scene can get, and the fanatical way Jerry, disbelieving the confession, goes on his epic wild-goose chase is riveting. This may indeed be Jack Nicholson's crowning performance. The actor's naturally ogival eyebrows, looking like naves of mini-cathedrals, his forehead crisscrossed by lines as if for a game of tic-tac-toe, the gaze alternately cozy and perforating, the mustache rugged, the receding hair hedgehoggishly erect—all this cuts deep. And then there is his mercurial, moving performance.

Penn has directed artfully, but, this time, not artily, and in Chris Menges he has a cinematographer who can make nature as poetic as Dürrenmatt described it. Everyone acts compellingly, not least Sam Shepard as Jerry's boss, and Lois Smith in an all-too-tiny role. That said, I can't help wondering what those Brits are doing in Nevada: Vanessa Redgrave, as the victim's grandmother who spouts an accent no one ever heard before; Helen Mirren as the psychiatrist who remains unabashedly British. As the prostitute in the novel—upgraded in the movie to a husband-battered waitress—Robin Wright Penn (Mrs. Sean Penn in real life) does nicely, as does also little Pauline Roberts as her daughter and Jerry's lure for the killer.

The worthwhile point is that no matter how astute and thorough the detective, chance can trip him up (yet why this should be a requiem for the crime novel, I don't know). It makes a haunting movie, though, even if the ending is deliberately fudged.

■ Despite omitting—perhaps judiciously—Dürrenmatt's epilogue, *The Pledge* is a responsible adaptation; ***Chocolat***, which Robert Nelson Jacobs adapted and Lasse Hallström directed from Joanne Harris's novel, is much less faithful to its source. The novel has serious though unfulfilled pretensions to being highbrow; the movie thrives on middlebrow sweetness and added pseudo-funny japes.

The novel tells the story of Vianne Rocher and her six-year-old illegitimate daughter, Anouk, habitual wanderers who blow into the small French riverside town of Lansquenet sometime during the 1960s. She rents a disused bakery on the central square, opposite the church, and converts it into a *chocolaterie*, where she sells irresistible goodies to which the suspicious and xenophobic townfolk gradually succumb. Her archenemy, the town priest, Fr. Reynaud, conducts a steady

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campaign against her liberating influence. Vianne is not a churchgoer; the pleasure of chocolate, eaten or drunk, is her religion. She is obsessed with her dead mother, a kind of white witch and fortuneteller. Vianne also has some of her mother's clairvoyance, and an inordinate love for her daughter. Fr. Reynaud's other nemesis is Armande Voizin, an irreverent old woman whom Vianne befriends, and who is the mother of Caroline Clairmont, a proper married woman epitomizing bourgeois conventionality. There is also the brutish café owner Muscat, who beats his wife, Joséphine. She eventually finds shelter with Vianne, and, like Armande, becomes her staunch ally. And there are river gypsies, who moor their boats in Lansquenet. One of them is Roux, a surly man good at repairing things, with whom Vianne has a one-night stand, though he apparently ends up with Joséphine.

The movie turns Fr. Reynaud into Count de Reynaud, the mayor, and invents a helpless young priest whose sermons the Count corrects and practically writes. The Count becomes the heavy, and the priesthood is practically exonerated. Roux is played by the handsome, loverboyish Johnny Depp, with whom Vianne has a romance that may turn steady, and even the ruthless Count gets a potential lover in Caroline, here a widow. There is very little witchcraft, and the book's guardedly hopeful ending becomes a blatantly happy one.

Even so, the scenery, shot by Roger Pratt, is lovely; and some of the dialogue (which bypasses the book's showy, interminable details about chocolate and chocolate-making, recondite French names for endless types of candy and pastry, casual but smug references to cities Vianne has lived in) is serviceable. And the performances of Juliette Binoche (Vianne), Lena Olin (Joséphine, and, offscreen, Mrs. Lasse Hallström), and especially Judi Dench (Armande) and Alfred Molina (Reynaud) could hardly be better. Little Victoire Thivisol (remembered from *Ponette*) is lovely, though dubbed into English. Rachel Portman, as usual, has composed an eclectic but nicely understated score. Even if its sanctimonious paganism is sometimes cloying, *Chocolat* is still tastier than most of what is around. And not even fattening. **NR**

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■ CITY DESK ■

Snow Day

RICHARD BROOKHISER

THE first sign of snow in the city can be unusual sounds at night. On early winter mornings, when the sleep cycle has brought me almost to awareness, I become aware of a hush, like sonic velvet. On it, like jewels in a case at Bergdorf's, are displayed a few discrete noises: the muffled spin of tires; the joyous hooting of a passerby (a child's squeal, coming out of an adult voicebox: We age, but our reaction to new snow doesn't). If I hear the hollow scrape of a plow blade, then I know it is snowing in earnest, and that when I get up the world will be transformed.

■

As soon as the new world of snow is in place, the process of destroying it begins.

■

Snow is tireless and ubiquitous. Six inches of it, newly fallen, seems less like a substance than an emotion: irony or love, which alters everything. Sharp things are smoothed, inconspicuous things are outlined, big things are hidden. The tips of 19th-century iron fence posts support billowing white sails. Park benches wear imposing, pre-emptive cushions: THIS SEAT IS TAKEN. Piled-up trash bags become round female forms: siesta in a harem. Cars parked on the sidestreets look like muffins just arrived at the coffee shop from the bakery for the morning rush. The statues of long-dead public men put on new couture. Around the corner from my apartment there is a bust of Washington Irving, kind, wise, and anxious; after a snowfall he wears a hat like a pope of the Coptic church. Peter Stuyvesant, around the corner in the

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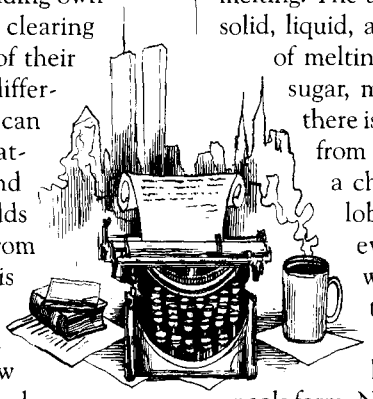
other direction, has thrown a cowl over his wiry bantam's shoulders, while his eye sockets, unwelcoming in the best of circumstances, have become cadaverous and demonic.

As soon as the new world of snow is in place, the process of destroying it begins. The first destroyer is you, going out to experience it. Your footprints leave proofreader's marks in the white margins of perfection. You can avoid looking at your handiwork only if, like Ulysses Grant, you never retrace your steps. The wind, second-guesser, rearranges the snow as tirelessly as the storm that put it in place. Clouds of powder tumble from branches as if from flour sifters; inch by inch, white yields to the brown and black of bark, smoothness to wrinkles. The first deliberate human tampering, besides walking and shoveling, is usually whimsical. Hand-sized scoops are taken from car roofs and hoods, either to be stuffed down the shirts of shrieking girls, or simply for the sake of leaving a mark. A venturesome rear end, heedless of cold, leaves its print on a step or a bench: This is my seat, I have a ticket. Dogs used to deposit artwork in the snow, but sculpture has been forbidden them. Even as Mayor Giuliani hammered the Brooklyn Museum of Art for showing Chris Ofili's Dung Madonna, the dog-owners of Manhattan have been persuaded, by 20-some years of fines, to clean up after their best friends.

Shopkeepers and building owners are responsible for clearing the sidewalks in front of their properties, and their different degrees of industry can leave checkerboard patterns of ice, slush, and bare concrete, like fields in Pennsylvania seen from an airplane. The city is responsible for the streets, and only when it sets to work does snow in New York become hazardous. The historian John Lukacs once wrote that Americans are not in love with the automobile, they are married to it. One of the bad aspects of the relationship appears when city streets must be cleaned for the almighty auto. The plows roll up carpets of powder and shove them against the curbs and parked cars. The next day, angry car-owners court heart attacks in the effort to free their imprisoned vehicles, while at intersections the drifts harden into slick and irregular mountain ranges, and every pedestrian becomes a Sherpa.



The city also puts down salt, to speed melting. The three phases of matter are solid, liquid, and gas; the three phases of melting urban snow are brown sugar, muck, and dirty water. If there is a thaw, then drops patter from awnings and scaffolds like a cheesy waterfall in a hotel lobby. There are drains at every street corner, and when they are unblocked they carry the runoff briskly away. But if they are blocked, then noisome pools form; New Yorkers stand on their banks, trying to gauge their depths. Usually, we guess, correctly, that the slush goes down only an inch or two; sometimes (*Surprise!*) we get a bootful of cold Cream of Wheat.

Snow is pretty, but it slows things down; New Yorkers' main interest is in getting rid of it. Mayor John Lindsay's failure to clean the streets of Queens

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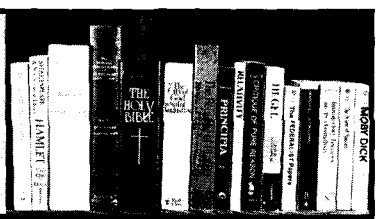

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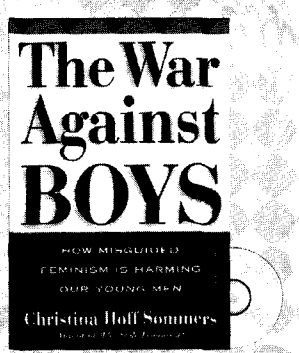

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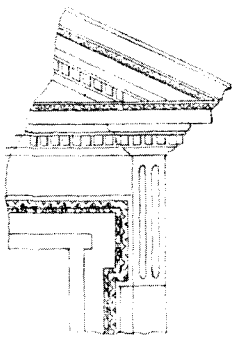
during a bad winter at the end of his first term almost cost him reelection (he won only because the Mets won the Series and he moved into their locker-room). The other thing New Yorkers like to do with their snow is boast about how bad it was. When he was a teenager, Alfred E. Smith witnessed the blizzard of 1888 and its aftermath, which brought out the city's one-upmanship: "[F]or the first time within the knowledge of anybody alive at that period, the East River froze over. . . . I saw a harnessed horse swung onto the ice, and a man ride across on horseback. Toward three o'clock that afternoon, a large piece of ice broke away and went down the river with the tide with some twenty or thirty people on it. The tow-boats on the river went alongside the cake of ice and picked the people off safely. The cake broke up before it reached Governor's Island."



When the snow finally melts, life returns to normal, and we see everything that didn't get swept up: cigarette butts, gum wrappers. All that remains of the new world are the corner drifts, and all that remains of them are a few fragments, jagged and black. **NR**

■ BOOKS IN BRIEF ■

In Fact: Essays on Writers and Writing, by Thomas Mallon (Pantheon, 352 pp., $26.95)

IT'S hard to decide whether Thomas Mallon is a better fiction writer or essayist, because he's so good at both. The appearance of *In Fact*, a delightful and eclectic collection of previously published criticism, won't settle the matter, but it will provide more proof that Mallon is one of the great literary talents at work today. The most interesting parts of *In Fact*—and they are all interesting, even when Mallon discusses authors and books his own readers have no intention of reading—come when he describes the art of the historical novel, that place where fiction and nonfiction converge and where Mallon has spent much of his career staking a reputation. On the difficulty of composing *Aurora 7*, which is set in 1962, he writes: "Having had the kind of happy childhood that is so damaging to a writer, I couldn't help but like being back in that personal Eden, where the crabgrass was high and my mom was good-looking." Three subsequent books traveled further back in time, transporting readers to 1948 (when Americans "were enjoying a last year without television") and the 19th century. Prepare for more of that on both page and screen, he says: "The past is the only place to which we can get away, and if I had one prediction for the millennium it would be that all of us, including novelists, shall be spending a lot of time—more than ever before—looking backward." And, I would add, looking forward to Mallon's next offering.

—JOHN J. MILLER

It's Getting Better All the Time: 100 Greatest Trends of the Last 100 Years, by Stephen Moore and Julian L. Simon (Cato, 294 pp., $14.95)

THIS book gets its title from a Beatles tune and shares some of the Fab Four's cheery optimism. Famed free-marketeer Julian L. Simon (the book was begun before his death in February 1998) and his protégé, NR contributing editor Stephen Moore, present a statistical state of the nation, quantifying the progress made in various areas of American life over the past 100 years. In easy-to-read charts and graphs, the book runs the gamut—from life expectancy (increased by 30 years since 1900), to food production (up 40 percent since 1950), to charitable giving (up nearly 400 percent since 1955). As the authors admit up-front, the book focuses on material rather than cultural trends; as a result, it may present too rosy a picture. Nevertheless, *It's Getting Better All the Time* will prove to be a tremendously useful resource for students, journalists, and others. More important, it serves as a valuable reminder of the blessings provided by political liberty and open economics. As Moore and Simon conclude, "Freedom works."

—CRISTOPHER RAPP

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WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

What Ashcroft Might Have Said

NEW YORK, JANUARY 19

SENATOR Feinstein, quizzing John Ashcroft, asked a question both interesting and profound. What I can't understand, she asked her former colleague in the Senate, is how you can feel as strongly as you do about all these issues and still undertake to enforce the law, as written and interpreted? All Mr. Ashcroft could say was what he said every few minutes to everyone, namely that he would do as he promised, enforce the law. Other witnesses, in Congress and elsewhere, agreed that he is a man without guile, that he will do as he said he would do.

We can take him at his word and feel confident. Of what, specifically? Confident that he would protect the right of abortionists ("reproductive-health consultants") to practice their profession, and protect also the right of free-to-choose enthusiasts to demonstrate. He was asked whether he approved of the *Roe* v. *Wade* decision, and he replied that he would not himself have voted as the Court had done, but that as far as he was concerned, *Roe* was the law of the land, and the law he would undertake to defend.

Other questions were less challenging. Someone got around to quoting something he had said to the effect that gun ownership was a device to guard against tyranny. The senator wanted to know—Are you saying, Senator, that we are living under tyranny? No, was the rejoinder. He might have answered, "Senator, the Second Amendment was passed as a hedge against the practice of tyranny, which had been exercised 15 years earlier. An endorser of the anti-establishment clause of the Constitution isn't affirming that right because he lives in a state with an established religion."

What Sen. Ashcroft manifestly did not feel at liberty to do was to expatiate heuristically on the subjects being explored. The First Amendment clause against an established religion is being variously interpreted and tested in different parts of the country. Most conspicuously, in the matter of public funds for private education, in the manner of junior GI Bills. Are we to assume that an attorney general who believes in vouchers, such as those being used in Florida, could expect no support from a Republican administration if the objection were raised before a federal court (which is bound to happen) that such vouchers were unconstitutional? It is a traditional practice for the Justice Department to file amici curiae briefs when an administration believes that its interpretation of the Constitution is correct.

The *Roe* v. *Wade* decision has been indirectly tested and probed several times. The Court has leaned in the direction of permitting reasonable modifications, while holding on to the fundamental affirmation of abortion as a constitutional right. It would be faint-hearted and wrong for the attorney general to decline to argue that, for instance, partial-birth abortions can't be constitutionally regulated by Congress.

We get to the profoundest question of all, which is, what can reasonably be demanded of an attorney general, or indeed of a governing official?

Some years ago Gov. Frank Clement of Tennessee commuted the sentence of someone on death row. And when he left office, he commuted the sentences of everyone on death row. Gov. Hugh Carey of New York went Gov. Clement one step further. He informed New York legislators that if they proceeded to enact a law reestablishing capital punishment, he—Gov. Carey—would instantly commute the sentence of anyone sentenced to death.

Some critics (I was one) charged that Mr. Carey's open-ended contumacy was an impeachable offense. He might have said that he would resign as governor rather than carry out the law; or else found some devious way to circumvent direct responsibility for enforcing such a law.

"Mom's gone too far this time. She put a trigger lock on my squirt gun!"

There wasn't much criticism of either the governor of Tennessee or the governor of New York, but it would have caused Sen. Kennedy to perish in his chair with disbelief if Mr. Ashcroft had said that he would not protect the rights of people to execute unborn children. And, of course, he was right to declaim as he did his responsibility to defend the rights of the abortion-minded. The moral perspective is too undeveloped on the question of abortion. Law-abiding attorneys general in the past have had to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act. The moral perspective against capital punishment is everywhere being pressed. If Mr. Ashcroft had said that he would never ask for a capital sentence in a federal prosecution because of his opposition to that penalty, what would we have got from Sens. Biden and Feinstein and Kennedy? A reminder that his only function was to press the law?

Well, the good senator will be confirmed, and will do the excellent job expected of him. But he has lost fine forensic opportunities.

McGovern's Third Freedom

NEW YORK, JANUARY 23

GEORGE MCGOVERN is at it again, endeavoring to mitigate human afflictions. He is better at mobilizing against natural afflictions than man-made ones. When he was the Democratic candidate for president in 1972, he did not do very much to encourage the anti-Communist coalition, but a great deal to describe the lot of human want. He is the son of a preacher, raised in the upper heartland of America, experiencing the Depression in which farmers were reintroduced to the long-lived paradox: They faced a starving community and could not make a living growing food.

Sen. McGovern serves as ambassador to the various United Nations food agencies and operates out of Rome. It is good news that the Bush administration has asked him to continue in service, because he is an incarnation of the

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human concern for people who are hungry and even die from hunger. And his dream, the gradual disappearance of hunger, is the theme of his new book, *The Third Freedom*. McGovern begins by reinterring Parson Thomas Malthus, the British economist who foretold starvation and pestilence on the grounds that birthrates were outstripping agricultural prowess.

We've known that wasn't so beginning about ten minutes after Malthus died; but McGovern gives us broad figures. When he ran for president, 35 percent of the world's people were hungry. By 1996, notwithstanding a 2 billion increase in the world's population, the percentage of the hungry was reduced to 17 percent. "The world now produces a quantity of grain that, if distributed evenly, would provide everyone with 3,500 calories per day."

Your face is rubbed deeply in the paradox. It was nicely expressed in a quizzical remark by Archbishop Dom Helder Camara of Brazil, whom McGovern quotes as saying sometime after the world war, "When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a Communist."

Sen. McGovern, in his readable book, endorses a continuation and an expansion of existing ventures, with special emphasis on the U.N. programs, notably the International Fund for Agricultural Development. McGovern italicizes his idealism in a single sentence: "I would like to see America take the lead in working toward a school-lunch program that embraces every child in the world." To do this requires exporting not only food, but the advanced technology of food-making.

There are, of course, problems at every level. Sen. McGovern acknowledges ruefully that some of his own grandchildren are skeptical of biotechnology. There is the conundrum of economic globalization's search for cheap labor, which here and there gives wages to workers, but insufficient to buy them food. How to straighten out that obliquity?

The Third Freedom: Ending Hunger in Our Time—isn't of the kind that makes its way by an anti-proliferation treaty, which requires a hundred-odd signatures to take force. You need hundreds of thousands, even millions, of participants. Sen. McGovern is most persuasive in pointing out that existing charitable bureaucracies need to be enlisted in any serious effort to bring food to the table of the hungry. Primarily the churches of the world, which are by definition charitable enterprises and have toeholds in every market. His estimate of the contribution by the United States to the cosmic enterprise is $5 billion.

The quiddity of it all is the challenge to marketplace mechanisms. The market is the great broker of human supply and demand. No demand is keener than for food to sustain life. How to translate that into a demand, not for substances that are limited in number by the postulates of nature—you can't increase rainfall—but for substances that are highly developed and developable? The overarching irony is the priority regularly given to arms production. If, to take only Latin America into account, one-tenth of the money spent on arms were spent on corn, hunger there would cease to exist.

Indispensable to any political breakthrough is a philosophical breakthrough. McGovern's *The Third Freedom* is a vibrant contribution to that mobilization of charitable concern.

High On Drug-Warring

NEW YORK, JANUARY 26

THE new president has a great deal on his mind, added to which is the burden, imposed by past legislation and executive order, to conclude the civil war in Colombia. That isn't the stated reason for our intervention in that part of the world. We're all over the place in order to stop the production and export of drugs, notably cocaine. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of President Pastrana's desire to bear down on the drug trade, but what the government of Colombia is actually worried about is a civil war. Bogota wants to cut off the cash supply enjoyed by the rebels who, at the moment, dominate an area in the south of Colombia approximately the size of Switzerland.

So now we hear about our newest FOL. That is a Forward Operating Location. We were using Panama up until 18 months ago, but when Panama finally asserted its sovereignty, it got twitchy about the continuation of U.S. search planes operating out of its territory. So? We moved the operation to Ecuador, and built an air base in Manta. From there our super US E-3 AWACS surveillance planes fly over Colombia and spot drug activity. Our pilots don't just drop bombs on the drug lords' enterprises. We radio the information to Colombian police and military detachments, and their role is to swoop down and abort the export of cocaine to—primarily—U.S. consumers. How long has this been going on?

About as long as memory holds out, in the matter of drug wars. What is most refreshing in recent news on the matter is Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's observation that we have got a demand problem on our hands, not a supply problem. The government of Ecuador is a little shaky, the incumbent president having inherited the deal permitting the U.S. FOL in Colombia. Ecuador has an unstated investment in the progress of the drug war. It desires success for the Colombian fight against its rebels, but not just that measure of success that would cause the warlords to move their operation south, into Ecuador.

So: Mr. Bush inherits a truly anfractuous diplomatic problem in South America in which different priorities are being shuffled in search of common interests, however fragile. If the drug lords began to subsidize not the rebels, but the government of Colombia, could we be certain that Colombia would then be so hospitable to AWACS planes and helicopters and military trainers?

O. Ricardo Pimentel, a columnist for the *Arizona Republic*, draws attention to the movie *Traffic*, as dramatizing the futility of our drug policies. In that movie is depicted the ultimate invincibility of cash-crop growers who can generate gold from tilling the soil. He seizes on the final sequence in the movie where the futile U.S. drug czar, played by Michael Douglas, asks officials how much money they will need to continue to fight the war. "More," answer the officials. "In this kind of war," Mr. Pimentel comments, "the answer will always be 'more,' and it will never be enough."

So, has SecDef Rumsfeld come up with a successful way to wage war against the demand for drugs? No. There are proposals, from such as Governor Pataki and ex-drug czar McCaffrey, that suggest changing the emphasis on how to treat drug addicts: treatment, instead of incarceration. "We jail about 450,000 people every year in the United States for nonviolent drug offenses." Speaking of civil wars, Mr. Pimentel gives us some perspective: The Confederate Congress called, at the outset of our Civil War, for the recruitment of 400,000 men.

—UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

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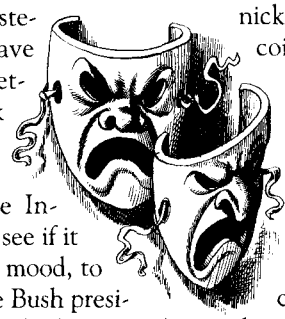
■ THE MISANTHROPE'S CORNER ■

FLORENCE KING

THE beauty of coming out for the repeal of the Nineteenth Amendment is that I am now at liberty to say "I have a feeling something is going to happen" without worrying about compromising my feminist credentials.

There's a lot to be said for casting off the shackles of logic and reveling in the freedom of female intuition. When men do it they call it "listening to your gut," which allows them to feel tough and realistic as they work in mysterious ways, but women have no compunctions about letting the psychic vibes rock on without restraint, so I'll follow suit.



I waited until after the Inauguration to write this to see if it would shake me out of my mood, to no avail. My sense that the Bush presidency is star-crossed did not budge.

I've had it since election night, when the first hints that something was wrong emerged as though from a script crafted by a master dramatist who has foreshadowing down to a science. Why wouldn't Gore get out of his car? What was making Bush late for his victory rally? And then there was that bleak autumnal rain that began falling in Austin after we learned what had happened. The deserted plaza littered with soggy abandoned signs was nothing less than film noir.

Florida provided just enough comic relief to heighten the tension. As Gore, already established as an odd duck, moved closer to obsession, we had nightly debates about what he would "do" if he lost—"do" being a euphemism for going insane or committing suicide. And if it happened, what of his enraged "base," who gave him 93 percent of their vote? What would they "do"? Nobody spelled that out either, but it was taken to mean what it usually means.

After the Supreme Court stopped the Florida recounts and W. won the Electoral College, I started a count of my own to see how many times the words "Gore won the popular vote" would be spoken and written. I lasted all of two days before it became clear that I couldn't keep up without a full-time staff of elves.

Letters to the editor, talk radio, the-man-in-the-street, and political shout-show regulars all pounded it home. "Gore won the popular vote by 500,000" was given in thousands at first, until the bigger-sounding "half a million" took hold. Then it was reversed to "Bush lost the popular vote by half a million." Liberals questioned his "legitimacy," nicknamed him "President-select," coined "Hail to the Thief," and vowed never to accept him as "their" president.

Then Bill Clinton publicly proclaimed Gore the real winner and thanked Bill Daley for running a victorious campaign. After that, Tom Brokaw could pull out all the stops in his snide interview with W., needling him about losing the popular vote, asking if he wanted to hide under the bedcovers on Inauguration Day, and warning darkly, "No president can govern without the consent of the people."

Commentator Tony Blankley characterized this pummeling as "brutal disdain" and predicted that unless Bush strikes back, "we will face the most vehement political disorder since the years leading up to the Civil War."

I don't know whether Blankley was listening to his gut, but he was certainly listening to mine because I have a feeling that all hell is going to break loose.

Blankley's Civil War comparison is an apt one. A measure of just how close to the edge we are is the sudden rebirth of the Abolitionist movement. You know it can't be long now when the attorney general-designate states under oath that he wouldn't dream of joining the Confederate army, while over in the other hearing room the Interior designee is denying that slavery is the jewel in the crown of states' rights. If you did a freeze frame of the entire Bush team at any given moment, every third member would be caught in the midst of saying "Slavery is abhorrent"—the 21st century's first administration posing in a living tableau of William Lloyd Garrisons and Harriet Beecher Stowes.

Calling slavery abhorrent is the last way left to refute liberal charges of racism, but it is leading them into a trap. If they keep on saying it they will be forced to back reparations; otherwise they will be accused of believing that slavery isn't so abhorrent after all.

Only Houdini could get out of this one, but he's not about to help because it was Houdini who got them into it in the first place. Bill Clinton intends to hang over W.'s presidency like the sword of Damocles, waiting for a chance to be the Comeback Kid. Maybe he can't be Mr. President again—maybe—but the big cheese by any other name would smell as sweet.

A former president, like a deposed monarch, is a rallying point for discontent. In the past, newly crowned kings understood that deposed monarchs had to be gotten rid of, but democracy is a poor substitute for *lettres de cachet* and iron masks. Clinton is now in the same position as the Duke of Windsor in the 1930s: ungone and not forgotten. The unemployed duke was much on the mind of Hitler, who had the idea of restoring him to the throne as England's first Nazi king. But Americans are citizens, not subjects. We don't do royal titles, so if all hell does break loose on W.'s watch and Clinton mounts the Short March from Georgetown to take power, we will have the first warm, friendly Director of Public Safety in history.

If you think a coup can't happen here, consider how the last few elections have accustomed Americans to political happenstance. Carter won because Ford was an appointed president—a nephew adopted by a Roman emperor. Bush the Elder won because he really ran for Reagan's third term. Clinton got his toe in the door because of Perot, and W. won because Gore was a weirdo. As a result, we have the Undecided Voter, in reality the catatonic voter who would rather freeze than decide. Add our 40-year celebration of "civil disobedience" that has jettisoned the civil and kept only the disobedience, and you have what are called "ripe conditions."

Just a feeling . . . **NR**

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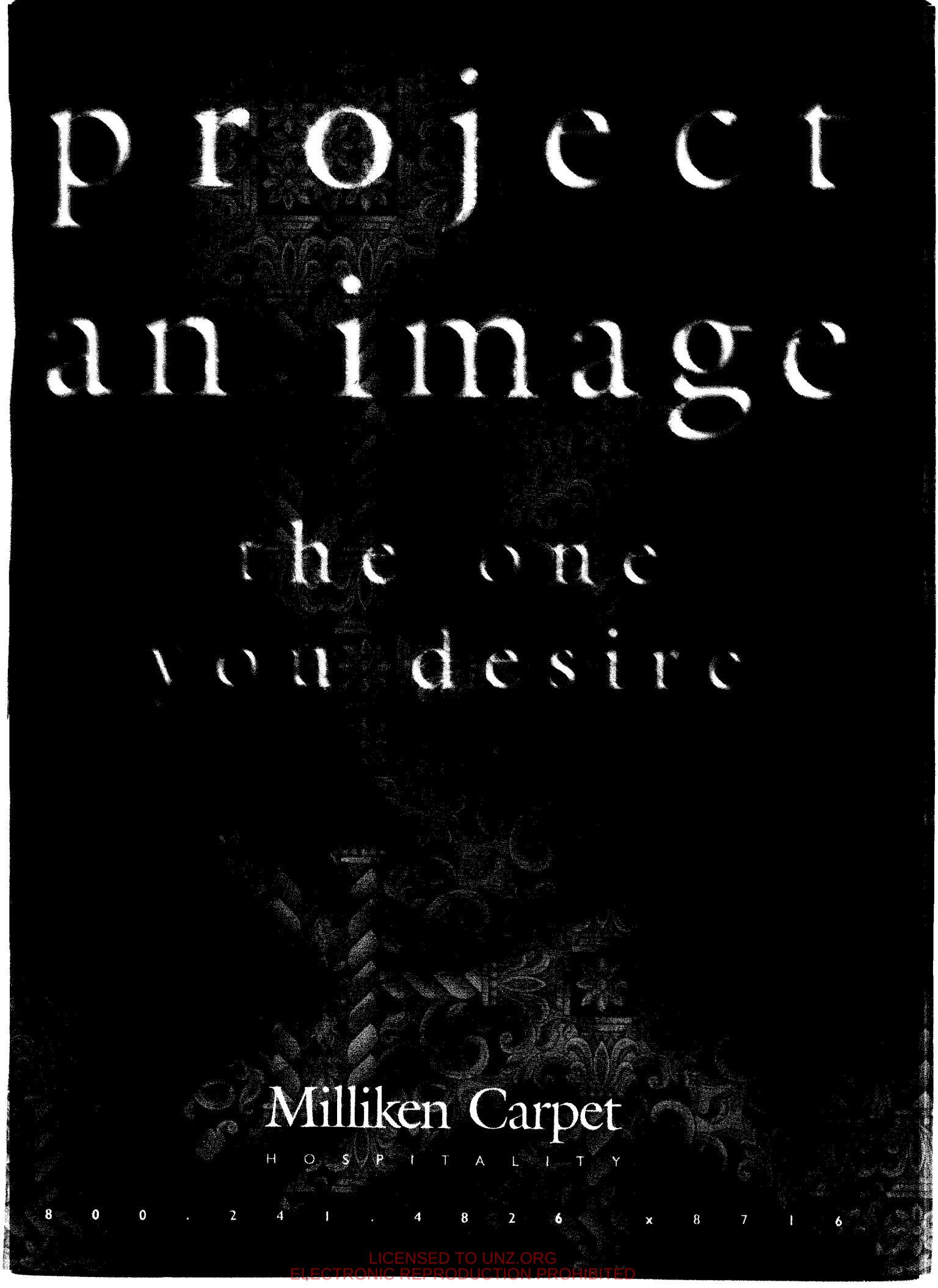

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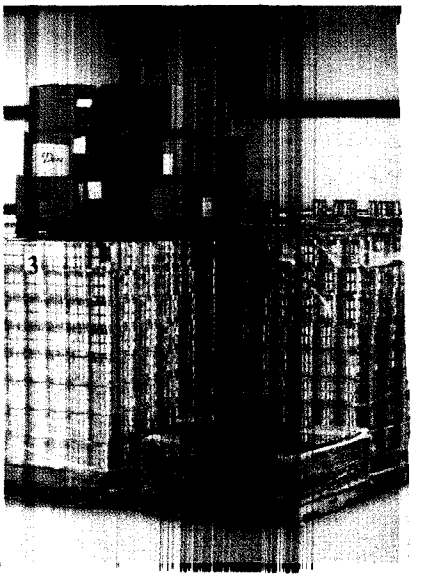
Don Smith, UPS package car driver, and Elder P.J. Thomas co-founders of Manna Ministries, Alabaster, Alabama

"We decided that nobody should have to choose between buying food and buying medicine."



"My partner P.J. and I co-founded Manna Ministries 12 years ago with just a couple of cans of food. Nowadays, we feed 478 families a month. My employer, UPS, has been supportive through it all. Helping me balance delivering packages with volunteering 60 hours a week, stocking our pantries and donating money when I won the UPS Jim Casey Community Service Award. As for me? I want to get more food donations, open Shelby County's first soup kitchen and feed more shut-ins. I'm quite a dreamer—there's always help down the road."

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